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Parent Guidelines

An admission decision, test score, or GPA is not a measure of a student's worth. And parents should always be mindful of the behavior they are modeling for their children. Knowing this, we encourage you to:

- Recognize that gaining admission to college is merely one step in a process of education that will include your student attending a college where she or he can maximize talents and growth. Emphasize the education.
- Resist doing for your students what they are capable of doing for themselves.
- Allow your child to take responsibility for his or her own part of the college application process. Be involved in the process, but do not try to control it.
- Resist relying on rankings and college selectivity to determine the most suitable colleges for your child.
- Realize that researching, selecting, and applying to colleges does not have to be an expensive process.
- Resist attempts to turn the process into a status competition. Develop a healthy, educationally based and family-appropriate approach to college admissions.
- Consider that gaming the system may not only diminish your child's self-confidence, but it may also jeopardize desired admission outcomes.
- Listen to, encourage, and believe in your child. Do not use the term "we" as in "we are applying to."
- Discuss the idea of education as an ongoing process, and how selecting a college might be different from buying a product.
- Love them enough to let them demonstrate the independence you have instilled in them.
- Keep this process in perspective. Remember that student skills, self-confidence, curiosity, and desire to learn are some of the most important ingredients in quality education and successful college admissions. Do not sacrifice these by overemphasizing getting into the "best" college.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST!

All colleges do not require an SAT score. Do you want to know a list of colleges and universities that do not use SAT I or ACT scores for admitting substantial numbers of students into Bachelor Degree Programs? Check out this website: www.FairTest.org

A FINAL NOTE FROM THE EDUCATION CONSERVANCY

WE ADMIT... GUIDANCE FROM THOSE WHO DO

Applying to college does not have to be overwhelming! The following principles and guidelines can help make the college admission process more manageable, more productive, and more educationally appropriate. This guidance is offered by the Education Conservancy, a group of admission professionals committed to calming the commercial frenzy by affirming educational values in college admission.

Principles

These guiding principles are relevant for parents, students, counselors, and admission deans:

- Education is a process, not a product. Students are learners, not customers.
- The benefits and predictors of good education are knowable yet virtually impossible to measure.
- Rankings oversimplify and mislead.
- A student’s intellectual skills and attitude about learning are more important than what college a student attends.
- Educational values are best served by admission practices that are consistent with these values.
- College admission should be part of an educational process directed toward student autonomy and intellectual maturity.
- Colleges can be assessed, but not ranked. Students can be evaluated, but not measured.
- Students’ thoughts, ideas, and passions are worthy of being engaged and handled with utmost care.

Student Guidelines

An admission decision, test score, or GPA is not a measure of your self-worth. And most students are admitted to colleges they want to attend. Knowing this, we encourage you to:

- Be confident! Take responsibility for your college admission process. The more you do for yourself, the better the results will be.
- Be deliberate! Applying to college involves thoughtful research to determine distinctions among colleges, as well as careful self-examination to identify your interests, learning style and other criteria. Plan to make well-considered applications to the most suitable colleges. This is often referred to as “making good matches.”
- Be realistic and trust your instincts! Choosing a college is an important process, but not a life-or-death decision. Since there are limits to what you can know about colleges and about yourself, you should allow yourself to do educated guesswork.
- Be open-minded! Resist the notion that there is one perfect college. Great education happens in many places.
- Use a variety of resources for gathering information. Seek advice from those people who know you, care about you, and are willing to help.
- Be honest; be yourself! Do not try to game the system.
- Resist taking any standardized tests numerous times (twice is usually sufficient).
- Limit your applications to a well-researched and reasonable number. No more than six should be sufficient, except in special cases.
- Know that what you do in college is a better predictor of future success and happiness than where you go to college.

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Introduction

As Counselors, we know how overwhelming the college process can be for students. But we also know that when you look back on this process, you will appreciate having taken it on and tackled it, giving yourself much credit and satisfaction. We do not expect or even encourage you to take on the college process alone. Your Counselor is here for you every step of the way, offering structured meetings, informal conversations, workshops, or any other correspondence you may need to accomplish your goals. You will have an enormous amount of questions in this process; just remember you are not alone. Every student has been where you are and you, like the others, will get through the college process with outstanding results. Please make effective and frequent use of your School Counselor. Now, get out there and start researching and visiting.

Sincerely,

Nicholas P. DiPaolo
K-12 School Counseling Coordinator
& The School Counseling staff



College Survival Checklist (continued)

Shared-with-Roommate Items

Audio equipment	TV	Coffee maker/hot pot/microwave, if allowed
Small refrigerator (if one is not provided)	Area rug	Posters/art

Toiletries, Beauty, and Hygiene

Antacid	Aspirin or other pain relievers	Adhesive bandages, antibiotic ointment
Vitamins	Antidiarrheal medicine	Cough drops
Shower caddy	Shower shoes (flip-flops)	Shampoo & conditioner
Hairstyling products	Bath and face soap	Travel soap container(s)
Toothpaste & toothbrush	Dental floss	Comb/brush
Tweezers	Lotion and/or facial moisturizer	Hair dryer/straightener/curling iron
Razor & shaving cream	Nail clippers	Cotton Swabs
Feminine hygiene products	Contact lens supplies	

Clothing

Underwear	Socks	Pants/jeans/leggings
T-shirts/blouses	Sweats	Pajamas
Slippers and/or flip-flops	Sweaters	Light/heavy jackets
Gloves /scarf/hat (and other foul-weather gear as needed)	1 set of business-casual clothes	2 pairs of sneakers or comfortable/walking shoes
1 pair of boots	1 pair of dress shoes	1 swimsuit
Bathrobe	Eye mask for sleeping	

Household and Kitchen Items

Paper towels	Trash bags	Light bulbs
All-purpose cleaner	Plastic storage bags	Food-storage containers
Dish soap	Wet wipes	Tissues
Bowl, plate, and cup	Coffee mug	Water bottle
Silverware	Can/bottle opener	

Miscellaneous

Umbrella	Backpack	Sports equipment
Backup pair of eyeglasses		

College Survival Checklist

This is an extensive checklist of essentials you will need to survive at college. Some items may not apply to you, but make sure to include those that do.

Dorm Room Organization and Storage

Bedside Lamp	Mini trash can	Storage bins
Under-the-bed storage trays	Desk lamp	Fan
Drying rack for laundry	Dry-erase wall calendar/board	Bulletin board & pushpins
Mini toolkit (including screwdriver, hammer, wrench)	Picture hangers (double-sided tape for concrete walls)	

College Linens and Laundry Supplies

Sheets and pillowcases (2 sets. Check with college for size needed; some college twin beds are extra long.)	Towels (3 each of bath, hand, and face)	Mattress pad (Check with college for size needed)
Pillows (2)	Blankets (2)	Comforter/bedspread
Clothes hangers	Laundry bag/basket	Laundry detergent, fabric softener & stain remover
Lint brush	Mini sewing kit	

Desk Supplies

Electronic storage media such as memory cards and USB flash drives	Stapler & staples	Printer paper (if you decide to bring a printer)
Pens & pencils	Pencil holder & sharpener	Notebooks
Folder w/ pockets	Labels of various sizes	3x5 index cards
Sticky notes	Paper clips and binder clips	Rubber bands
Tape	Scissors	Stamps & envelopes
Extra print cartridges (if you take a printer)	Stackable desk trays (at least 4)	Highlighter pens (multiple colors)
Ruler	Notecards or stationery	

Electronics and Technology for First-Year Student

Laptop (printer is optional; there are usually computer labs where you can print)	Portable speakers (if you want to play music from laptop/MP3 player)	HDMI cord, ethernet cord for computer (check if your room has wireless)
Surge Protector	Extension cords	3-2 prong adapters
Headphones	Camera	Cell phone
Charging cords		

BEFORE YOU BEGIN... The Most Important Step

Some Food for Thought...

“Picking a college is an important decision because the experience can greatly affect the quality of one’s future. It can be the most exciting four years of your life. On the other hand, you can plod through largely untouched and unaffected... many teenagers give more thought to learning to drive than to picking a college. Confront yourself honestly. Why, really, are you going... for fun or for some other reason? What are your abilities and strengths? What are your weaknesses? What do you want out of life, or in life, something tangible or intangible? Are you supremely confident or hesitantly unsure of yourself? Do you want to give or to get? Are you a self-starter or in need of nurture and structure? Are you socially self-sufficient, marching to your own drummer, or do you need warm, familial support? Do you live in the fast track? And so on. If the student does not look to him/herself, s/he is vulnerable to herd thinking—one of the principal causes of bad decisions. It takes both clarity and courage to look at oneself probingly and then to make decisions based on what one sees there and not be influenced by friends or classmates. After you have questioned yourself, you can effectively choose a college; but only after you have examined it, too.”

~Loren Pope (Author of *Looking Beyond the Ivy League and Colleges That Change Lives*)

“Most people think of college as preparation for a profession, a job, or graduate school. But it is also a chunk of life—six percent of our days and years. Here we make lifelong friends. We discover intellectual strengths. We begin to forge a philosophy. It can be a peak experience, exciting and enjoyable. Finding the right college is a project in itself and is not one to be taken lightly. Since it is you who will attend, and not some statistical average, you must spend time determining your needs. What, for example, do you want out of college? What kind of person are you? What are your likes and dislikes, hopes, and ambitions? Are you gregarious or solitary? Have you decided on a career, or are you still searching? Often students pick a college more or less at random, on the chance recommendation of a friend or because of a well-known name. They commit themselves to spending four crucial years in an environment chosen by accident. It is four years of your life. With planning and forethought, you can make them the best.”

~Dr. John Brooks Slaughter (President, Occidental College)

**Additional forms are available in the Guidance Department. Please stop by to pick one up.*

SENIOR MONTHLY COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- Register early for SAT / ACT.
- Check SUNY Application requirements.
 - SUNY Applications are available now and should be sent out as soon as possible. We recommend using the common application (www.commonapp.org).
- Check college application essay and supplemental requirements.
- Create a Common Application account at www.commonapp.org
- Begin completing your application. Attend the WHS Common App Workshop.
- Get off to a good start academically.
- Continue working on your essays (started over the summer) and resume, have your English teacher read them.
- Student Athletes must complete the NCAA Clearinghouse form available on-line at www.ncaa.org.
- Meet with your counselor to review the process and make sure you are on track within the first three weeks of September.
- Review your profile on Naviance. Match your Naviance and Common App accounts.
- Remind your teachers to write letters of recommendation. Complete the Teacher Recommendation Survey in Naviance (required).
- Talk to your parents/guardians about filling out FAFSA and CSS profile as soon as possible.
- Let your teachers and counselor know when your application deadlines are.
- Make sure you are registered for AP classroom, and you have paid for your AP Exams.

OCTOBER

- Take SAT / ACT.
- Visit colleges: open houses, personal interviews, or overnights.
- Finalize college essays and resumes.
- Release scores for tests directly to the colleges you are applying to by going to www.collegeboard.com for SAT and www.act.org for the ACT.
- Financial Aid: some colleges require the completion of the CSS Profile, which can be done online at www.collegeboard.com. **Complete FAFSA as close to October 1st as possible.**
- Scholarships: set up a profile on www.fastweb.com for scholarships.
- Turn in your Early Action/Early Decision Applications at the beginning of this month. Apply 2 weeks prior to your deadlines. Send SAT/ACT scores 2 weeks prior to deadlines.
- Update your Naviance account to inform your counselor that you applied using CACF (College Application Communication Form).
- Check email frequently for updates from colleges; create portal accounts where applicable.
- Complete the self-reported transcript required for any colleges that require it.

NOVEMBER

- Take SAT, if needed.
- Most Early Action and Early Decision deadlines are this month.
- Make sure your Naviance account is up to date.

DECEMBER

- If you get accepted to a college, let your counselor know.
- Check that colleges have received all materials: application, test scores, (sent by College Board or ACT), financial aid form.

New students should consider joining one or two groups chosen from the following list:

- clubs or organizations related to their major
- honors programs
- sports programs
- intramural sports
- music groups
- artist groups
- religious organizations
- service organizations

If you appear friendly and approachable, people are more likely to respond positively. Students who walk with their head up and greet people appear to be friendly.

Freshmen often try to stay with the same friends they meet during orientation or during the first week of school. The student who is open-minded will have opportunities to meet many interesting people and build friendships that will last a lifetime.

Living on a college campus provides an opportunity to become friends with people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, to learn about the world, and to appreciate differences among people. This experience is an important part of a student's education.

Also trying out different churches, mosques or temples is a way to meet hundreds of students in one's own faith.

Choosing a Roommate

Colleges offer several rooming accommodations. A student who has not made the decision whether to live alone or with a roommate should consider some of the advantages to both.

Without a roommate a student can set their own schedule. The single student does not wake up to a roommate's alarm clock or hair dryer and does not have to worry about waking someone late at night. Music choice and volume is not an issue. Neither is a messy or neat room.

On the other hand, roommates have a chance to form a special friendship. They have someone to share their joys, fears, and frustrations. They also can share the expense and the fun of making the room a special place to live. Roommates can remind one another of deadlines, take messages for each other and be a good listener when one is needed. Roommates can also introduce each other to people they know.

Freshmen do not always have a choice to live alone or with a roommate, so it is important for students to stay flexible.

Cautions about Credit Cards

As soon as students have their 18th birthday, they often become the targets of aggressive marketing by card companies. The reason: they no longer must have a parent or legal guardian co-sign for the card.

A poll by the American Institute of Certified Financial Planners found that more than 80 percent of college students had at least one credit card and that 10 percent had at least \$7,000 in debt.

Making the Transition from High School to College

Most students are excited about being on their own as they get ready for college. And along with the excitement, they sometimes feel anxious about the uncertainties they face.

When students deal with some of their uncertainties before attending college, they make a smoother adjustment. They also have more fun during their freshman year and accomplish their goals as well.

Making the Grade

Most soon-to-be freshmen wonder if they will be able to handle college courses. Almost from the beginning of high school, teachers, and parents stress that college work is more challenging.

One of the reasons freshmen may find college classes more challenging is that for the first time the responsibility for learning rests entirely on the student. The work in college is more demanding than high school, but it is also more interesting. Succeeding under new and challenging circumstances offers an excellent opportunity for personal growth. Outside of classes, students also have a chance to take part in unique extracurricular activities and meaningful work experiences. Just because college offers more challenges than high school, does not mean students can't be successful. Take the following steps to help make the adjustment easier:

- Form study groups that meet regularly for each of the most difficult classes.
- Read all assigned material.
- Schedule additional time to study alone.
- Break work into sections and weekly deadlines.
- Use the library.
- Talk with professors and/or teaching assistants and attend office hours, or schedule appointments to talk about assignments or ask questions.
- Go to the campus-learning center where tutors can help with most subject areas.
- Show an interest in classes by asking questions either during or after class.
- Maintain a weekly planner to keep track of assignments and deadlines.
- Seek out mentors such as older students, faculty, employers, or relatives and listen to what they have to offer.

Matching Teaching Styles to Your Learning Styles

Students can deal more easily with the increased academic pressures in college if they take time to identify their own learning styles, according to David Kolb of the University of Puget Sound.

SENIOR MONTHLY COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

JANUARY

- Let your Counselor know of any college decisions.
- Turn in any Community Service Sheets to the Guidance Office.
- Continue to check for scholarships.
- If deferred from early pool, look into what additional information you can submit to increase your chances of regular pool admission.

FEBRUARY

- Fill out the Scholarship Forms we give you in your English class completely and accurately.
- Carefully read all information from colleges, check college portals.
- Continue to check for scholarships.

MARCH

- If colleges request additional information, send it to them immediately.
- If you are accepted to a college, let your counselor know.
- Inform counselors of any admission decisions and/or correspondence from college.

APRIL

- Decide where you wish to go - make final visits if you are still unsure.
- Financial aid offers will continue to arrive.
- If you are on a wait list, write a letter of sincere interest and send any supporting material you can.
- If you are accepted to a college, let your counselor know.
- Make sure you completed your Senior Exit Survey in Naviance.

MAY

- AP exams are the first two weeks of this month.
- Make final decision - send deposit by May 1st.
- Fill out housing forms.
- Write "thanks, but no thanks" letters to colleges you will not attend.
- Inform your counselor if you have received a scholarship.
- Register for classes.

JUNE

- Graduation is upon us!
- Make sure you have responded to all requests from your college.
- Remember to thank everyone who helped you this year: your parents, teachers, and friends.

SUMMER

- Carefully read the Newsletter we sent you.
- Start packing!

COLLEGE! Will I Get in Four Years from Now?

What are colleges looking for?

Know the most important factors for gaining admission, and compare them to what YOU are doing now, or will be doing throughout your four years of high school!

◊ A strong GPA

What it says to a college: *This student is conscientious and potentially capable of passing courses at our college.*

◊ A strong course load

What it says to a college: *This student has challenged him/herself with as many upper-level courses he/she can handle and has taken advantage of the resources offered by the school.*

◊ Strong SAT/ACT scores

What it says to a college: *This student has the innate and learned ability to handle college level courses and be successful, and not likely to fail and/or withdraw/drop out of school.*
(RETENTION RATE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO A COLLEGE'S IMAGE.)

◊ Community Service

What it says to a college: *This is a caring and compassionate student that gives up his/her free time to help others in need. This student may have been exposed to others who are less fortunate than them and has decided to reach out, hopefully resulting in the ability to show empathy for others and an appreciation for those different from him/her.*

◊ Strong Involvement in Sports/Clubs/Activities

What it says to a college: *This student has contributed to his/her school and is a "do-er." He/she is likely to become involved in clubs and activities at our school too.*

◊ Part-time employment

What it says to a college: *This student may have a strong work ethic, holding a job for a significant period. This student has had valuable work experiences that may have taught him/her responsibility and how to get along well with others.*

◊ Strong counselor and teacher letters of recommendation

What it says to a college: *This student is being supported by people in the field of education and are putting their professional opinion in writing, therefore, what they say holds a lot of weight and is taken seriously.*

◊ Perseverance/Overcoming Obstacles

What it says to a college: *This student has overcome adversity, or a significant obstacle in their young life; this proves he/she will not be quick to give up, or drop out, or fall to pieces when faced with challenges in college.*

◊ Demonstrated Interest towards the colleges

What it says to a college: *This student has taken the time to research a specific college and has networked with them through open houses, virtual events, campus tours, and/or interviews; this affirms that they are a serious, qualified applicant who may likely end up attending if admitted.*

and building name, and the instructor's name. A class schedule is also simply a list of classes a student is taking, which includes course name and number, time, and location of the class, and possibly the instructor.

- **Student Identification Card (I.D.)**—A student ID is usually required in college. It is similar to a driver's license and generally includes a photograph of the student, a student number, the student's name, the name of the college and the semester enrolled. The IDs require validation each semester. The card is often required for admittance to functions sponsored by the college or for identification when cashing checks or for other purposes.
- **Syllabus**— This is an outline of the important information about a course. It is written by the professor or instructor, and usually includes important dates, assignments, expectations, and policies specific to that course. Some are quite lengthy.
- **Transcript**—The transcript is a permanent academic record of a student at college. It may show courses taken, grades received, academic status and honors received. Transcripts are not released by the college if the student owes money to the institution.
- **Transfer of Credits**—Some students attend more than one institution during their college career. When they move or transfer from one college to another, they also transfer accumulated credit hours from the former institution to the new one. The new institution determines which courses will apply toward graduation requirements.
- **Tuition**—Tuition is the amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition does not include the cost of books, fees, or room and board. Tuition charges vary from college to college and are dependent on such factors as resident or out-of-state status, level of classes enrolled in (lower, upper, or graduate division), and whether the institution is publicly or privately financed.
- **University**—A university is composed of undergraduate, graduate, and professional colleges and offers degrees in each.
- **Withdrawal**—Students may withdraw from courses during a semester, but there are established procedures for doing so. The college catalog and/or Class Schedule generally specify the procedures. Written approval from a university official must be secured and some fees must be paid.

- **Major/Minor**—A major is a student’s chosen field of study. It usually requires the successful completion of a specified number of credit hours. A minor is designated as a specific number of credit hours in a secondary field of study.
- **Non-Credit Courses**—These are classes or courses that do not meet the requirements for a certificate of a degree at a given institution. Non-credit courses may service one of several purposes: to explore new fields of study, increase proficiency in a particular profession, develop potential, or enrich life experiences through cultural and/or recreational studies.
- **Open-Door Institution**—Open-door institutions are usually public two-year, junior/community colleges. The term open door refers to an admission policy that states that anyone who is 18 years of age or older, whether or not a high school graduate, can be admitted to that college.
- **Pass/Fail Courses**—Pass/fail courses do not earn letter grades or grade points for students. If a student passes a pass/fail course, he/she receives a “P” (pass) or “S” (satisfactory) on the transcript and the credit hours. If the student does not pass the course, he/she will receive an “F” (fail) or a “U” (unsatisfactory) on the transcript and no credit hours. The evaluation for the pass/fail course is not figured into the student’s GPA.
- **Petition**—A petition is both the process and the form a student fills out to request consideration of special circumstances. For example, if a student is denied admission, they may petition for admission based on extenuating circumstances.
- **Prerequisite Courses**—A prerequisite course is a course taken in preparation for another course. For example, Accounting 1 is a prerequisite for Accounting 2.
- **Public/Private Institutions**—Private and public institutions differ primarily in terms of their course of financial support. Public institutions receive funding from the state or other governmental entities and are administered by public boards. Private institutions rely on income from private donations, or from religious or other organizations and student tuition. A Board of Trustees governs a private institution.
- **Registrar**—The registrar of an institution is responsible for the maintenance of all academic records and may include such duties as maintenance of class enrollments, providing statistical information on student enrollment, certification of athletic eligibility and student eligibility for honor rolls, certification of the eligibility of veterans, administering probation and retention policies and verification of the completion of degree requirements for graduation.
- **Schedule of Classes**—Colleges publish and distribute a Class Schedule book for each semester, during the previous semester. With the help of academic advisors and/or faculty members, students make up their own individual class schedules for each semester that they are enrolled. Courses are designated in the Class Schedule by course department, course number, time, and days the course meets, the room number

FACTORS IN SELECTING YOUR COLLEGE

(Additional forms available in Guidance Office)

To assist you in finding a college which best suits your needs and fits your criteria, please take the time to review the factors below and circle all items that reflect your preferences. *(Please return this form to your counselor prior to your Junior Planning Conference.)*

STUDENT NAME:

LOCATION:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Northeast
	<input type="checkbox"/>	South
	<input type="checkbox"/>	West
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mid-West
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mid-Atlantic
SIZE:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small (under 2500 students)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium (2500-6000 students)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large (6000 - 10,000 students)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Large
STUDENT BODY:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coed
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Sex
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Balanced male/female ratio
TYPE OF SCHOOL:	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-Year College
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4-Year College
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical School
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business School
ENVIRONMENT:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large City
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small City
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Suburban
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural
ACADEMIC INTERESTS. (LIST ALL POSSIBLE COLLEGE MAJORS):		
SPECIAL PROGRAMS:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Foreign Study
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work/Student Program
	<input type="checkbox"/>	LD Programs
	<input type="checkbox"/>	ROTC
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:
COST AND CONTROL:	<input type="checkbox"/>	State School
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private School
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Under \$10,000
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over \$10,000

LEVEL OF COMPETITIVENESS BASED ON YOUR ACADEMIC PROFILE:	Less Competitive: Below C, Verbal/Math PSAT range below 450
	Competitive: B- to C, Verbal/Math PSAT range 450-525
	Very Competitive: B to B-, Verbal/Math PSAT range 525-575
	Highly Competitive: B+ to B, Verbal/Math PSAT range 575-625
	Most Competitive: A+ to B+, Verbal/Math PSAT range 625-800
HOUSING:	On Campus
	Commuting
ATHLETIC PROGRAMS:	Intercollegiate (Division I, II, III)
	Intramural
	List sports and divisions:
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS STAYING ON CAMPUS OVER THE WEEKENDS:	Very Important
	Important
	No Preference
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS:	Non-Denominational
	Church Related
	No Preference

PLEASE LIST SCHOOLS YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN OR ARE ALREADY CONSIDERING:

IF RELEVANT, PLEASE SHARE ANY ISSUES/FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT THE COLLEGE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, I.E., FINANCIAL, FAMILIAL:

- **FAFSA**—Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The almost universal application for financial aid, including loans, grants, college work-study, and other federal and state programs. It is often required before a student can be considered for scholarships, also.
- **Fees**—Fees are additional charges not included in the tuition. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of materials and equipment needed in certain courses, and they may be assessed for student events, programs, and publications.
- **Financial Aid**—Aid is made available from grants, scholarships, loans, and part-time employment from federal, state, institutional, and private sources. Awards from these programs may be combined in an “award package” to meet the cost of education. The types and amounts of aid awarded are determined by financial need, available funds, student classification, academic performance, and sometimes the timeliness of application.
- **Fraternities/Sororities** (also called the Greek System)-Fraternities (for men) and sororities (for women) are social organizations that are very active in various activities. Through a process of mutual selection, called Rush (which takes place during a specified period of time), students may be offered the opportunity to (pledge) a certain fraternity or sorority. Not all colleges have these organizations.
- **Full-Time Enrollment/Part-Time Enrollment**—A full-time student is enrolled in 12 or more credit hours in a semester (full-time status for a Summer term is generally 6 credit hours). A part-time student is enrolled in less than 12 credit hours in a semester (less than 6 in a summer term).
- **Honor Roll**—Students are placed on honor rolls for GPAs above certain specified levels. Criteria for President’s, Dean’s or other honor rolls vary at different institutions. In most cases, students must be enrolled full-time to be eligible.
- **Humanities Courses**—Humanities courses are classes covering subjects such as literature, philosophy, and the fine arts. Most undergraduate degrees require a certain number of humanities credit hours.
- **Lecture/Laboratory/Discussion Classes**—In lecture classes, students attend class on a regular basis and the instructor lectures on class material. Laboratory classes require students to perform certain functions in controlled situations that help them test and understand what is being taught by Master’s or Doctoral students and are becoming more common on college campuses.
- **Letter Grades/Grade Point Averages (GPA)**—Most colleges use both letter grades and GPAs in determining students’ grades. Grades at most colleges are figured using the following method: A’s are worth 4 points, B’s are worth 3 points, C’s are worth 2 points, D’s are worth 1 point, F’s are worth 0 points. To figure a GPA, simply multiply the number of hours a course is worth by the number of points for the letter grade, then add up the totals for each course and divide by the number of credit hours. The result is the Grade Point Average.

Favorite Websites for College Research

- **CLEP**—The College Level Examination Program can be administered to students who desire to obtain college credit by taking proficiency tests in selected courses. If the student scores high enough on the test, college credit can be awarded. There is a charge for each test taken. Information concerning an individual institution's policies towards CLEP Tests can be found in the institution's catalog.
- **Concurrent Enrollment**—A student can enroll and attend two educational institutions at the same time provided that certain criteria are met. For example, a high school senior can concurrently enroll in high school and in college provided he/she meets established criteria and the student's counselor, with the permission of the principal, writes a letter to the college granting permission. A college student can concurrently enroll at two higher education institutions provided that certain criteria are met. Permission for concurrent enrollments is generally made in advance.
- **Course Numbers**—All courses are identified by numbers, usually containing 3 or 4 digits. For example, Freshman English might be 1113. The first digit indicates the class year in which the subject is usually taken, the middle 1 or 2 digits identify the course within the subject field, and the last digit indicates the number of credit hours the course carries. A course number beginning with a "0" indicates that it does not carry credit hours applicable to a degree.
- **Credit Hours**—Courses taken in college are measured in terms of credit hours. To earn one credit hour, a student must attend a class for one classroom hour (usually 50 minutes) per week for the whole semester (usually 16 weeks). Classes are offered in 1-5 credit hour increments, and sometimes, larger amounts.
- **Curriculum**—A curriculum is composed of those classes prescribed or outlined by an institution for completion of a program of study leading to a degree or certificate.
- **Degree Requirements**—Those requirements prescribed by other institutions for completion of a program of study are generally termed degree requirements. Requirements may include a minimum number of hours, required GPA, prerequisite, and elective courses within the specific major, and/or minor areas of study.
- **Degrees**—Degrees are rewards for the successful completion of a prescribed program of study. These are the three basic types of degrees: Associate—obtainable at a two-year community or junior college; Baccalaureate or Bachelor's—offered by four-year colleges and universities; Graduate—obtained after the bachelor's degree, i.e., Masters or Doctorate.
- **Drop and Add**—Students are generally permitted to drop courses from their class schedules and/or add other courses. Colleges allow varying lengths of time for students to add and drop classes. The college catalog or class schedule should note the correct procedures. Students usually need written approval from designated college officials to initiate dropping or adding a class. A small fee is often required.

College Search Sites

- 1) WHS Naviance – www.connection.naviance.com/westlakehs
- 2) College Board – www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org
- 3) Peterson's – www.petersons.com
- 4) N.A.C.A.C. – www.nacacnet.org
- 5) College Confidential – www.collegeconfidential.com
- 6) College Data – www.collegedata.com
- 7) Fast Web – www.fastweb.com
- 8) Unigo – www.unigo.com
- 9) Princeton Review – www.princetonreview.com
- 10) U.S. College Search – www.uscollegesearch.org

Financial Aid & Scholarship Websites

- 1) Free Application for Federal Student Aid – www.fafsa.ed.gov
- 2) Fastweb – www.fastweb.com
- 3) Scholarships.com – www.scholarships.com
- 4) Financial Aid – www.finaid.org
- 5) College Net – www.collegenet.com
- 6) Scholarship Monkey – www.scholarshipmonkey.com
- 7) Cappex – www.cappex.com
- 8) College Scorecard – www.collegescorecard.ed.gov
- 9) Student Aid – www.studentaid.ed.gov
- 10) NY State Higher Education – www.hesc.ny.gov

Additional Important Websites

- 1) Common application – www.commonapp.org
- 2) ACT – www.actstudent.org
- 3) College Board – www.collegeboard.com
- 4) SUNY – www.SUNY.edu
- 5) Test Optional Schools – www.fairtest.org
- 6) NCAA – www.ncaa.com
- 7) NCAA Clearinghouse – www.ncaastudent.org

CAMPUS VISITS



1. **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** online or call for an appointment several weeks prior to your visit. Have several dates in mind.
2. **PLAN TO VISIT AS MANY COLLEGES AS YOU CAN ON THE WEEKENDS** or during school vacations. Missing too many classes could have a negative impact on your grades. Do not wait until the spring of your senior year to start visiting the colleges you've been accepted to.
3. **BRING** an *unofficial transcript* to the interview. You can obtain one from the Guidance Office. See your counselor or a secretary. **ASK** for it **SEVERAL DAYS** in advance, please.
4. **BE PREPARED** for your interview with several questions. Ask about topics pertinent to your situation. Do not ask questions that are answered in the catalog or view book.
5. **TAKE** the campus tour. See **ALL** facilities (i.e., Freshman Dorms!). Sit in on a class, if possible. Some schools will arrange for overnight stays in a dorm. This is the best way to get a feel for the college. Consider touring the academic building of the major you are interested in.
6. **DO** include your parents.
7. **Do not let a bad tour guide or dreary weather impact your view of the school.**
8. **Go to places where students congregate: the student union, the bookstore, the main cafeteria, a dorm. Ask them what they like and do not like about the school.**
9. **Get a copy of the school newspaper: What are the top stories? What kinds of activities are listed: movies, bands, theater, sports, etc.**
10. **Take notes: Things that you like, things that you do not like. You may want to reflect on these when writing colleges' supplemental essays.**
11. **SPEND AS MUCH TIME** on the campus as possible. Ask several students (other than the tour guides) what they think of "their Alma Mater!"
12. **SEND A "THANK YOU" NOTE** to the Admissions Counselor who interviewed you.
13. Obtain a valid document of your college campus visit to account for your absence. This documentation should be turned into the Assistant Principal's Office.
14. In addition to (*not in place of*) an in-person visit, please register, and take advantage of the wide array of virtual visit options.
15. **ANY QUESTIONS, see your Counselor!**

COLLEGE TERMINOLOGY

- **Academic Advisor/Counselor**—This person will help you select the correct courses, review the course requirements in the field you have selected to pursue and help you with any academic problems you may encounter. At some institutions, faculty members provide academic advisement as a part of their job duties. Other institutions may designate specific staff as academic counselors.
- **Academic Probation**—All colleges require students to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) to remain in school. Anyone not maintaining satisfactory progress toward his/her educational objectives will be placed on probation for a semester.
- **Academic Suspension**—A student on Academic Probation may be placed on Academic Suspension if he/she fails to maintain or achieve the minimum cumulative GPA required. A student placed on a suspension will be dismissed from the college for a specific period—usually one semester. Specific requirements may be placed on the student's re-entry into college.
- **Advanced Standing Credit**—These are credit hours that an institution accepts toward a degree from courses that the student has earned elsewhere. Such credit may be given for work done at another higher education institution, by examination or "testing out," or by military service.
- **Alumni**—People who have graduated from the institution.
- **Associate Degree**—The Associate Degree is granted upon completion of a program of at least two, but less than four years of college work. Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees are conferred upon students who successfully complete programs designed for transfer to a senior college. The Associate Degree requires completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours, exclusive of physical education activity courses or military science courses, with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 (a "C" average).
- **Associate of Applied Science Degree**—This degree is conferred upon students who successfully complete a program designed to lead the individual directly into employment in a specific career. The Applied Science degree has the same requirements as those stated above for the Associate Degree.
- **Audit**—A student who does not want to receive credit in a course may, with the approval of the instructor, audit the course as a "visitor." A student who audits a course usually cannot ask or petition the institution at a later date to obtain college credit for an audited course.
- **Bachelor's Degree**—This is the undergraduate degree offered by four-year colleges and universities. The Bachelor of Arts degree requires that a portion of the student's studies be dedicated to the arts— literature, language, music, etc. The Bachelor of Science degree requires that a portion of the studies be in the sciences—chemistry, biology, math, etc. The minimum credit hour requirement for a Bachelor's Degree is 120 hours.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Like everything else related to college, scholarships come in all sizes, shapes, and amounts. Below is an explanation of the most common forms of scholarships. In depth research is required and it is never too early to start looking although the typical time frame to apply by is November through March of senior year. Be sure to check individual scholarship deadlines, as they vary greatly.

School Based Merit Scholarship

These are scholarships given by the colleges that are based on grades and SATs. Most often, first year applicants do not apply for these; they are offered automatically during the admissions process and renewable each year of college as long as the student continues to meet the criteria.

School Based Special Scholarships

These are special scholarships that colleges may offer in specific areas. Examples include community service, major-based, socio-economic status, ethnicity and so on. These are NOT offered automatically and must be applied for separate from the admissions application. Here, the student should search the individual college's website to see what they may offer. Websites like www.fastweb.com often help advertise these.

Private Scholarships (National)

Corporations, non-profits, community organizations, etc... offer scholarships to students of all backgrounds, academic standing, and socio-economic status. The old adage is that often these scholarships go unawarded because students simply do not apply for them. There are hundreds of thousands of private scholarships available. The easiest way to find these scholarships is by creating an account on www.fastweb.com or another reputable scholarship search database. Never pay for a scholarship service; this is a clear indication of a disingenuous organization. Keep in mind these scholarships are competed for nationally but still very much worth applying for. Scholarship amounts can vary from \$500 to \$20,000 and may or may not be renewable.

Private Scholarship (Local)

Many local organizations and businesses sponsor scholarships for students in the Mount Pleasant community. Often, these awards are given for criteria other than academics, including community service, need, cultural background, extra-curricular involvement, and athletics. These scholarships are advertised through the Guidance & Counseling Department usually in January of senior year. Recipients of the awards are strictly from the Mount Pleasant area. Scholarship amounts can vary from \$500 to \$3000 and are usually NOT renewable.

**** Be sure to check out the different scholarship websites located in this book.*

CAMPUS VISIT CHECKLIST

Are you ready for your trip? Consider the places you may want to visit while on campus. Of course, it would take more than a few days to visit all these centers of college activity, and not all of them may be significant to you. However, you should be familiar with every place where you can get information about the prospective choice. Decide which of these are of interest to you before you arrive on campus. In most cases, the admissions officer will help you arrange to speak with college personnel at each activity center.



- ACADEMIC ADVISING OFFICE
- ADMISSIONS OFFICE
- ART GALLERIES
- ATHLETIC FACILITIES
- AUDIOVISUAL CENTERS
- BOOKSTORE
- CAREER PLACEMENT OFFICE
- CLASSROOMS AND LECTURE HALLS
- COMPUTER FACILITIES
- DORMITORIES
- EATING FACILITIES
- FINANCIAL AID OFFICE
- FRATERNITY AND SORORITY HOUSES
- HEALTH CENTER INFORMAL GATHERING PLACES
- LANGUAGE LABORATORIES
- LIBRARY
- MUSIC PRACTICE ROOMS
- RADIO AND TV STATIONS
- RELIGIOUS CENTERS
- SCIENCE LABORATORIES
- STUDENT CENTERS
- STUDENT COUNSELING OFFICE
- THEATRICAL FACILITIES

CAMPUS VISIT NOTES WORKSHEET

Name of College: _____ Date of Visit _____

Names of people I met: _____

Academic Offerings: How is the curriculum structured? What are the strongest programs? Are there rigid requirements? What are the offerings in your field of interest? Who teaches most of the classes? What study abroad programs are offered? How available are internships? What support services are available?

Campus Facilities: What was the appearance of the campus? Are facilities up to date and accessible? Where has the college spent its money?... on classrooms?... athletics?... dormitories?... library?... technology?

Location: What are the pluses and minuses of the college's location? What's there to do off campus? How is campus security? Is traveling convenient/affordable?

Social Life: What is the social life on campus? And off? Is it intellectually and culturally alive? Do the clubs and activities offered appeal to you? Is there an active Greek life? What opportunities are there to be involved in athletics?

Student Body: If you visit in the summer, be sure not to judge a college by just one tour guide. If you visit when classes are in session, what impressions did the students leave you with? Are they outgoing and friendly? Do they seem happy?

Your Overall Impressions: _____

Questions you still want answered: _____

Financial Aid Fact Sheet

IV. LOANS

A. **Federal Direct Loans**

- 1 - Student may borrow \$3,500 (1st year); \$4,500 (2nd year), \$5,500 (3rd and 4th year)
- 2 - Subsidized – need-based: loan is interest free while in school
- 3 - Unsubsidized - interest must be paid while student is in school – students eligible for \$2,000 per year in addition to the amounts listed in item # 1
- 4 - Interest rate - for 2025-26 – 6.39%
- 5 - Student pays it back. No parental obligation
- 6 - The origination fee is 1.057%
- 7 - You must file a FAFSA to get a Direct Loan

HOW TO APPLY:FAFSA

B. **Direct Parent Loan (PLUS)**

- 1 - Credit-based loan
- 2 - Parents can borrow if there is a difference between total cost of attendance and financial aid awarded
 NEW – maximum loan is \$20,000 per year; \$65,000 aggregate per student
- 3 - Can defer principle payment until six months after student graduates or falls below half-time
- 4 - Interest rate for 2025-26 is 8.42% with a 4.228% loan origination fee
- 5 - If parents are credit denied they can seek a co-signer or the student becomes eligible for an additional Unsubsidized loan - \$4000 for 1st and 2nd year; \$5000 for 3rd and 4th year

HOW TO APPLY: Varies by school, but student must file FAFSA

C. **Private Education Loans** (also called Alternative loans)

- 1 - Loans in the student or parent/sponsor's name that require a co-signer from a private lender
- 2 - Can borrow the difference between the total cost of attendance minus financial aid – usually used instead of the Parent loan
- 3- School must certify the loan

HOW TO APPLY: Student applies with lender of choice

V. OUTSIDE SOURCES

1 – **Outside Scholarships**

- A - Check with Guidance Office about scholarships from local civic organizations, ROTC scholarships, GATES millennium
- B - Do not pay anyone to search for you and follow the simple rule – ‘If it seems too good to be true, it probably is’

2 - **Athletic Scholarships**

- A – Register with NCAA Eligibility Center (www.eligibilitycenter.org) – this will provide student with requirements needed to participate in collegiate athletics
- B – Speak to high school and college coaches – a verbal commitment is not binding

VI. GENERAL RULES

- 1 - APPLY EARLY – check with each school for deadlines
- 2 - FERPA – Once student is enrolled, they must authorize the school to discuss information with parent or other persons
- 3 - Use each schools Net Price Calculator to help estimate actual cost
- 4 - FAFSA application can be completed as of October 1 of the senior year of high school
- 5 - **All forms must be re-filed every year**
- 6 - When in doubt call the College Financial Aid Office for an appointment

Financial Aid Fact Sheet

CONTACT EACH COLLEGE TO FIND OUT WHAT FORMS THEY REQUIRE AND THEIR DEADLINES
ALSO ASK FOR THEIR 6 DIGIT FEDERAL SCHOOL CODE (needed for FAFSA)

FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid (required by all colleges) – www.studentaid.gov

FAFSA Estimator - <https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/>

CSS PROFILE - Only required by some colleges – check with schools – www.collegeboard.com

NYS Aid Application – www.hesc.ny.gov

I. **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS**

A. **Pell Grant**

- 1 - Based on all monies coming into home, taxable and non-taxable income, parental and student
- 2 - Interest income, pensions, and other assets are also counted
 - a. Pre-tax contributions to tax-deferred accounts (401K, 403B, etc.)
- 3 - The amount of the grants depends on cost of the school and #'s 1 and 2 above
- 4 - Award is maximum is \$7,395 (for 2025-26)
- 5 - Can be used at any eligible school in the United States (and some abroad)
- 6 - No repayment

B. **SEOG (Supplementary Education Opportunity Grant)**

- 1 - Federal money distributed by colleges for Pell eligible students

HOW TO APPLY: FAFSA

II. **STATE GOVERNMENT**

A. **New York** – money can only be used in NYS by NYS residents

1 - **TAP**

A - Based on your student/parent NYS net taxable income (must be below \$125,000) and schools tuition rate

B - Award is from \$1000-\$5,665 (for 2024-25). Higher Education Services Corp. (HESC) determines the actual award

C - No repayment

- 2 – **Additional Academic-based Scholarships** – see Guidance Counselor or go to www.hesc.ny.gov

HOW TO APPLY: TAP form at www.hesc.ny.gov

- 3 – **Excelsior Scholarship** – For students whose parents earn less than \$125,000 – up to full tuition at SUNY/CUNY only

- 4 – **Enhanced Tuition Award (ETA)** – For students whose parents earn less than \$125,000 – up to \$6,000 per year after other NYS awards to attend a private college/university that participate in the program

III. **COLLEGES**

A. **Academic Scholarships**

- 1 - Usually based on GPA and SAT/ACT scores
- 2 - No repayment (check conditions and length)
- 3 - Ask each school – Do you give them?

B. **Grant-in-Aid**

- 1 - Based solely on financial need as determined by the FAFSA and/or CSS Profile
- 2 - No repayment

C. **Work Study** (could also be considered federal student aid)

- 1 - Student is eligible to work to help pay for indirect college expenses
- 2 - Student earns these funds through employment
- 3 - Does not pay for direct costs/reduce bill

HOW TO APPLY: Use FAFSA form and for some schools the CSS Profile

PARENTS' ROLE IN CAMPUS VISITS

“I guess I came on this college visit because my son needed a chauffeur.”

“Here is my daughter, competently asking the details about programs in engineering. Although I have been an engineer for twenty years, my professional skills are not the ones she needs today to help her make a decision about college. I am not sure that I can contribute to this college visit.”

These comments are typical. Parents sit in the background and pace the floor of waiting rooms, unattended and uninformed about the nuts and bolts of college choice, while their sons and daughters go through their paces, suave and sophisticated, outwardly showing the bravado of the initiated, even though they may be hesitant, apprehensive, or trembling inside. At the cost of thousands of dollars a year, parents should be more than the family chauffeurs when their children ask to go college visiting.

By doing some homework and asking the right questions, any parent can become educated about the world of college admissions. Yet few are taking the initiative to do so, and many are left perplexed and frustrated. *“I would like to ask questions, but I don't know who to ask, what to ask about, or even if I should ask,”* remark many parents. With resignation, a father defined his role by admitting, *“I'm on this visit to pay the motel bill. Of course, next fall I'll be important once again when it comes time to pay the tuition bill!”*

Sitting in the background need not be the parents' role in the college choice process. The guidelines for making a campus visit that are presented in this document can help you through the maze of college choice in two ways. First, they will enable you to evaluate which aspects of college life are of critical value to you and your child. Second, they will show you how to take the initiative to find out what you need to know about the schools your child is considering.

Prepare for the next college visit by reviewing the following suggestions before you leave home.

Decide what your goal is for each visit. Is it to get information about a specific program, or to get a flavor of the quality of life on campus? Do you want to confirm impressions about the school, or check out some rumors you overheard at a cocktail party?

Often parents do not know what they are looking for until they arrive on campus. After touring the elaborate art studios of a prominent women's college, a father remarked with earnestness, *“Laura has always shown talent as an artist, but I never thought of her becoming an artist until I saw these facilities. I'm not sure what I was expecting to find on this trip, but I certainly didn't expect the realization that my own daughter might come here to develop a talent into a profession.”*

Another father was surprised at his own intense negative reaction to a popular urban university with a national reputation in a variety of sports. *“This place could give my son the best professional training in business administration anywhere, but there's no way he's going to be the star quarterback he is now. I am not as enthusiastic as I was before we came.”*



Make appointments prior to your visit. Once you have determined your goals and objectives, it would be wise to call the Admissions Office and make an appointment for a tour of the campus and an interview. If you have questions that Admissions cannot answer, they will direct you to the appropriate office. Although most parent and student inquiries can be satisfied during an interview with an admissions officer there are others on campus that can be very helpful.

The DEAN'S OFFICE can provide details on the quality of life, housing, academic advising, and student supervision, for example.

The FINANCIAL AID OFFICE can provide forms and schedules for federal, state, and private monies. Many financial aid officers take counseling duties very seriously and might spend time with a family reviewing college costs and the various methods of payment.

COACHES enjoy meeting prospects and their parents. Coaches can help parents by reviewing the support services their department provides athletes who participate in competitive sports.

The CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT OFFICE is responsible for counseling students regarding graduate study and careers.

The HEALTH SERVICE will provide information on the school's ability to meet the medical needs of its students.

The CHAPLAIN (or head of any religious club on campus) can give parents an idea about the ways campus life supports their ethical or moral values.

Although it is certainly not necessary on a first visit to touch base with all the experts, it is good to know they are there. In particular cases one or more of these can help you decide if the college is appropriate. Offered one mother, *"My son has a handicap which makes walking great distances impossible. We love the school, but we are worried about his ability to get to classes on time. The Dean of Students not only assured us that someone would review his class schedule, but also during our talk mentioned that a popular resident adviser had the same handicap. The Dean arranged for our son to be in that young man's dorm so he would not feel isolated with his problem."*

"We went to one school and had no idea we could speak to anyone about financial aid. On this visit, to make sure we didn't waste any time, I phoned ahead; after his admissions interview my son can talk to the Director of

Financial Aid and find out his real chance of getting a loan." Parents and students are encouraged to visit with any specialists on campus that may influence a decision to apply and ultimately attend.

Discuss your plans with others who are familiar with the college admissions process. Parents of other students, teachers, and guidance counselors at the high school will offer opinions and ideas. Make a mental note of their impressions and the information they provide about the school you will be visiting.

Read all that you can about the school before you leave home. One mom remarked, "I'm so relieved she read about the program in nursing before we came. Louise would have looked foolish in that interview if she had had to ask for information that's readily available in print." All colleges and universities will send literature about programs and campus life. Request this literature by mail or by phone from the Admissions Office and read it carefully before you visit. If schools are slow about responding to your queries, consult the collection of college guidance material at your high school or public library. There are also several excellent general references that can be purchased at low cost.

FINANCIAL AID TIPS

- Student and parents should get their FSA ID that used to sign the FAFSA and other documents - <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/>
- **File your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** as soon after **October 1** of your senior year of high school
- **FAFSA estimator** - <https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/>
- **CSS Profile** – Not a free application. Available in October. Used primarily by more selective schools. It asks for more personal financial information than FAFSA. Visit the College Board website for more information and deadlines - www.collegeboard.com. Many schools have deadlines as early as November
- **New York State Aid Application** - The FAFSA will allow you to link to the state site (www.hesc.ny.gov for New York residents) if you list at least one school within your state of legal residence
- Research outside scholarships using free and reputable search engines such as www.fastweb.com, www.collegeboard.com, www.tuitionfundingsources.com Be aware of the numerous scams that will ask for money to assist you in getting free money
- Speak with the Financial Aid representative when visiting schools
- Refer to a school's **Net Price Calculator** to determine estimated out-of-pocket cost
- Call the Financial Aid office (or check websites) at the schools you are interested in to find out if they require any additional forms such as the CSS Profile or campus-based form and to check for filing deadline dates
- DO NOT pay someone to help you file the FAFSA – it is a free form that is not as daunting as it may seem. If you have any questions, call a Financial Aid office and they can assist you free of charge.

LEARNING DISABILITIES AND COLLEGE ADMISSION

Colleges are looking for diversity and having a learning disability is a form of diversity. Colleges will often look at an applicant's grades and test scores in a new light if presented with evidence of a learning disability. The learning disability may help put lower grades and class rankings or test scores like the SAT or ACT in a learning disability context.

Here is an example: A student ranked in the top half of their high school class is up against an applicant pool with a majority of students from the top 25% of their classes. Showcasing a learning disability can help bridge this significant gap in grades. A learning disabled student with an average GPA of 3.4 may be competitive against an applicant pool of that happens to include mostly students with GPA's around 3.7. Other factors such as academic activities and leadership also impact admissions.

REVIEWING COLLEGE SUPPORT RESOURCES

Review each prospective college's academic support programs. Students with learning disabilities must familiarize themselves with their needed accommodations and ask for these accommodations from their colleges. Get in touch with each college's learning disabilities resource - who will be more than likely located in the college's academic support services department.

Here are some steps to take while reviewing colleges:

1. Contact the college's academic support department. Ask to speak with a "learning disabilities specialist." Write down their name.
2. Ask the learning disabilities specialist if they have experience working with students having similar disabilities. If so, how many? What are usual accommodations given these students? Ask about specific software tools or processes used to help students with this particular disability.
3. Ask about the retention rate of LD students. How long does it take students using the program to complete their required courses? How involved is the LD resource in helping each student. What is the ratio of students with disabilities to LD specialists. What types of support does the institution offer faculty in terms of training in accommodating students with special needs? Is support in the program offered by interns, graduate students, peer tutors or trained professionals?
4. Review expected LD accommodations, based on IEP and LD assessment, with the learning disabilities specialist. Gauge learning disabilities specialist's resource's level of enthusiasm and/or helpfulness.
5. Ask for the learning disabilities specialist's phone, email, and mailing address.

FOLLOWING UP

It is important to stay in communication with each college's academic support program. A learning disabilities "portfolio" should be readied including:

1. A recent assessment of the learning disability.
2. IEP or record of accommodation at the high school.
3. Go ahead and forward this information to the selected college's learning support/LD Specialist.

Adapted from: <http://www.thecollegessoluio.com/getting-into-college-with-learning-disabilities/>

Encourage your son or daughter to spend some time away from you. *"We insisted that Jerry take an hour to wander around the college by himself. We hoped he would meet some people his age and find out what it is really like. I have never felt that I was leading my son to slaughter, but his reaction to going off on his own amazed us. He was incredulous that we would desert him, but my husband insisted, and he went grudgingly."*

Although on the one hand a visit & interview is an "adult" experience, on the other, taking the initiative to explore a new place without the comfort of companions may be scary for a youngster. Although it may not be easy to convince your child of this, it is important that students and parents have time to see the campus independently of one another.

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You are now ready to make your visit and put your homework to the test. Do not rely solely on the formal and traditional tour sponsored by the Admissions Office. Remember, it is geared to the needs of students first and to those of parents incidentally. It can provide you with an overview of the school, an introduction, so to speak. But you will want more than this.

While your child is engaged in an interview, or discussing academic programs with a counselor, take off on your own. Armed with a map of the campus, which can be picked up in the Admissions Office, and the questions that follow, you will be ready to explore any school from the inside out. By stopping people along the way to ask them about life on campus you will most likely get the best and greatest variety of information and attitudes about the school. By the time you have finished your self-guided tour, you will be an expert sleuth and interviewer as well as a highly informed parent.

Here are some suggestions to help you use the questions that follow to your best advantage:

Seek a variety of people with differing points of view to respond to your questions; take comments from each and create a composite that will give a flavor of the school. A dean of a professional school, admissions officer, librarian, resident hall adviser, student, coach, secretary in a departmental office, and work-study student in the cafeteria are some of the many types of people who live and work on any college campus.

Try to find people who are positive, knowledgeable of such things as class size, course offerings, the advising system; and attuned to the academic and intellectual mood on campus.

Look for a balance of information and opinions. The questions I suggest you ask on your self-guided tour will not conform to easy "yes" or "no" answers. A well-phrased question invites a detailed response. Listen carefully for facts and figures. Watch people as they respond: are they gregarious, friendly, cautious, cynical, and hedging? The attitude of the reply may reveal as much about the school as the information.

Be persistent. Not everyone on campus will be gracious or a lively conversationalist. If one person rebuffs your advances collect yourself and approach another. Seek people on their own territory; students, for example, can be found in dorms, libraries, the gym-or lounging just about anywhere. Look for impromptu settings and off-the-cuff responses. Remember, if you wanted information alone, you could have stayed home and read the catalog. On your self-guided tour, you are looking for a flavor or a feeling about an educational environment that is a combination of people talent, physical setting, location, tradition, and attitude. You can find the intangible if you begin your hunt with the positive attitude that your youngster's well-being and your financial investment are on the line and worth this time and energy.

Do not let the questions rule you. You are the best judge of which questions meet your needs and will help you feel in charge of the impromptu interviews. Omit ones that do not seem appropriate. Review them carefully before you begin your tour.

**HOW DOES A STUDENT GET AN ACADEMIC ADVISER?
WHAT IF A STUDENT WISHES TO CHANGE ADVISERS?**

Even those lucky few who enter college as astrophysics majors or pre-meds need academic advising. The average freshman certainly needs to be guided along new academic pathways. Choosing from hundreds of courses, dozens of majors, seminars, lectures, and studios can be overwhelming. Meeting departmental and collegiate requirements is serious business. The academic adviser is the first link to academic success. Does the freshman choose his/her own adviser? Is the adviser assigned before the student comes on campus? Can a change of adviser be made without great difficulty? Do the faculty and administration take the advising system seriously; or is it haphazardly organized? Answers to these questions will give you an idea of the pride people have in their work as teachers and masters in their field. At some schools advising is considered a happy and rewarding part of faculty responsibility; at other schools it is considered drudgework.

**WHAT ARE THE CLASS SIZES?
WHO TEACHES UNDERGRADUATES?**

These are crucial questions. At a larger school class size will be larger, and assistants may oversee lower-level courses. This may not be all bad. Students need to learn in different settings, and graduate students can be better teachers than experienced professors--they are closer to the material and often have the enthusiasm that is characteristic of people starting a career. It is most important that there be variety.

Often professors and graduate students are available outside of class. They will join social clubs or dorm groups at weekly meals or invite students to their homes for parties. This information contact with professors is a key to many successful undergraduate experiences. In an environment where there are few adult models for youngsters to know on a personal basis, seeing an awesome or revered professor in the relaxed atmosphere of his or her home (or on the ball field or at the theater) provides the possibility for students to evaluate intellectual questions in a more human and nonacademic context.

**WHERE DOES A STUDENT GO IF THERE IS A PROBLEM?
IS THERE A PERSON OR AN OFFICE IN CHARGE OF NONACADEMIC AFFAIRS?**

Concerns about academic programs, careers, sexual identity, drugs, and development or independence from home and family are normal for college students. On all campuses there are people whose responsibility is helping students get information and support to cope with a new environment and lifestyle.

Vocational-technical schools and programs

Vocational-technical schools and programs offer education and training that is specifically targeted to specialized areas within the employment domain. Career choices may require that students first obtain the specialized training that these programs offer before a reasonable job search can occur. Both public and private institutions house such programs. Public programs may be found at technical institutes, public community colleges, and area vocational-technical centers. Private programs are often called "proprietary programs," and may be offered at private or "proprietary" trade, technical and/or business schools. Students can access programs focusing on different occupational areas. Examples include computer technician, nurse's aide, medical assistant, broadcast technician, veterinarian assistant, plumbing, air conditioning, truck driving, barbering, automotive tech, or cosmetology.

Adult Education and Continuing Education Programs

A wide range of course offerings can be found in adult education programs. Adult/continuing education programs appeal to those who are studying to take the GED Test; to those who need to improve basic academic skills; as well as to those who wish to take a course for self-enrichment.

There are no admission requirements, as students do not have to be enrolled at the host college or university to take continuing education courses. The only requirement may be the paying of the course fee. Students may take continuing education courses in order to obtain an advanced sense of what a similar college academic course will be like, to retain certification in specific fields of student/employment, or for self-enrichment.

Life Skills Programs

Some students may not have the academic and/or social skills to attend four-year colleges or universities, two-year colleges, vocational-technical programs, or adult education programs. Such students may have the need and desire to increase basic academic skills and knowledge but may have an equal need to learn increased social and life management skills, while also receiving vocational training. A handful of life skills programs exist throughout the country, offering such training for independence. A list of many of these has been provided later in this document.

Resources for Students with Disabilities

Types of Schools and Programs

A wide array of postsecondary education options exists for all students, including students with learning disabilities and special needs. As should all students, students with learning disabilities should find as much information as possible about each option before making an enrollment decision. Students with learning disabilities should look for schools and/or programs that accommodate their needs. Tours of the campuses and/or program sites, along with interviews are good ways to gather information. Below are explanations of the different options that exist for students.

Four-year colleges and universities

There are thousands of four-year colleges and universities across the United States, each having its own distinct personality. Some four-year institutions are large, enrolling thousands of students at any one time, while others are quite small. Institutions also vary by admissions criteria, academic standards, and course offerings. However, the one thing that all four colleges and universities have in common is the granting of bachelor's degrees upon completion of the degree program. Most programs are structured so that students can sample courses from various topical areas in their first two years of enrollment, and then specifically concentrate on courses related to a declared major in their third and fourth years of study.

Four-year colleges and universities also house graduate and professional schools. Students interested in studying for a profession that requires more than a bachelor's degree will attend a graduate or professional school in order to earn a master's, specialist's and/or doctoral degree(s).

Some 4-year colleges and universities also have learning support programs. Typically, students must apply separately for these programs and there is an additional cost. A list of many of these has been provided later in this document.

Two-year colleges

One of the advantages of two-year colleges is the flexibility that students have in sampling course offerings. For those who need to work to remediate certain academic skills, or for those who would like to sample one or two course offerings in different subject areas, a two-year college option may be ideal. Students may take various courses simply to satisfy their interest in gaining basic information, without pursuing a more detailed path toward a degree in that subject area. Or students may take series of courses that lead to either an Associate of Arts (AA) degree or an Applied Science (AAS) degree. Students who earn an AA degree may later transfer credits to a four-year college or university. Those who have earned an AAS degree (which is occupation-specific, such as automotive technician) may be able to transfer some credits earned to a four-year institution.

There are two different types of two-year colleges—public community colleges and private junior colleges. Public community colleges have open admissions policies. These institutions are usually not residential. Private junior colleges often require entrance examinations or some level of equivalent work experience and/or extracurricular activities. Most are small residential schools: students live on campus or in the surrounding community. Private junior colleges may have less flexibility regarding the taking of random course offerings.

Do people you speak to show an awareness of the support services on campus? In general, is there a network of adults and other students who can help freshmen through the adjustment that is part of leaving home and living on their own? Are the services and the people who provide them perceived as useful by those you ask? Is there a positive attitude that seeking help is not compromising and that it does not detract from a student's sense of independence and maturity?

WHO MAKES THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ON CAMPUS? WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY ARE BROKEN?

A university or college is a community of people who have come together for a real and important job: academic and intellectual growth. This cannot go on unless people have respect for one another. No matter what may be said to the contrary, all schools have rules and regulations. If they are so prominent that people direct their lives by the book, the rules may be getting in the way of learning.

If people in the community feel that the administration, faculty, and students share rule making, it may mean that all groups in the community feel that their interests are protected by their decision-making power.

The days of *in loco parentis* are gone, but discipline, responsibility, and respect for others should be in evidence. Today it is not a question of rules or no rules but of who makes the rules and whether everyone feels comfortable with the arrangement.

WHERE DO STUDENTS LIVE?

This simple question will allow the person you ask to reflect on the quality of life as well as the variety of living options. Many schools do not guarantee housing to students; therefore, it is essential that there be apartments and rooming houses available in the community. Do people who live off campus participate in campus life? Are there single-sex and coed dorms, fraternities and sororities, and residential colleges where faculty members live in the same dorms as students?

People should not only be aware of the variety of options but also respond with an opinion about the quality of residential life. Where and how a student lives will critically determine the quality of life. Whether it is an austere high rise, or a small, intimate dorm is not as important as the students' sense of comfort about the situation. It should not be a problem to pick and choose housing options; whether it is might give you a key to the rigidity or flexibility of life on campus.

WHERE DO STUDENTS GO WHEN THEY ARE NOT IN CLASS?

Unlike in high school, class time in college accounts for a small part of the week (12-16 hours). Of course, study does not allow for an overwhelming number of leisure hours. Many students work to help meet the cost of their education; others have commitments to teams or musical groups. The campus should have a variety of places for students to study, work, and play.

Are the popular student hangouts the library, student union, gym, dorm lounges, or Clancy's Bar? If everyone is going into town after the one o'clock class, this may give you an indication of the seriousness of academic life.

WHERE DO STUDENTS EAT?

Don't take for granted that the school has good dining facilities just because there is a room and board fee listed in the catalog. All schools today should take into account that the eating habits of the college-aged student may be different from others. Being tied into the three traditional American meals may not be as healthy for a youngster studying late at night and sleeping late in the morning as following a more flexible plan. Some schools have meal plans whereby students receive coupons that can be spent at dining halls, cafeterias, coffee shops, after-hour rathskellers, or even grocery stores on campus. This helps to assure that food service will be there when the student needs to eat and gives the sense that the school recognizes and supports individual differences.

WHAT ARE THE ON-CAMPUS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS?

Take a look at student newspapers. Is there only a weekly, or is there a daily as well? Are the editors highly political, in touch with the world outside? Are there campus issues that reveal wide coverage? What attitudes towards sports, parties, and guest lecturers do the publications convey?

Who advertises in the paper? Are there plenty of restaurants, movies, and stores off campus to add a wider dimension to college life? Do student organizations publish their own newsletters? Is there a special press for ethnic or minority groups on campus?

The variety of publications will give a sense of the students' sophistication, diversity of community, and awareness of the world around them. The people you interview should express an attitude about on-campus publications. How does their attitude affect your feelings about the school?

IF YOU HAD A CHILD PREPARING FOR COLLEGE WOULD YOU SEND YOUR CHILD HERE?

Again, the "yes" or "no" is not as important as the reasons behind the answer. Someone may respect the academic environment but be concerned about the high cost of this campus as compared with the state university's cost. Someone else may be very positive about the intimate and supportive atmosphere of a rural campus but realizes that his child needs an urban environment. The good qualities and the dubious characteristics of both school and responder will surface with a question of this nature.

WHAT ABOUT THIS CAMPUS MAKES YOU HAPPY TO LIVE OR WORK HERE?

There may be many reasons offered; some may be repeated by a variety of people. The question allows the speaker to go into detail about facets of campus life that make it a pleasant or unpleasant place to be. Again, be sure to watch for attitude as well as information.

Play Division III Sports

Division III schools provide an integrated environment focusing on academic success while offering a competitive athletics environment. Division III rules minimize potential conflicts between athletics and academics and focus on regional in-season and conference play.

While Division III schools do not offer athletics scholarships, 75 percent of Division III student-athletes receive some form of merit or need-based financial aid.

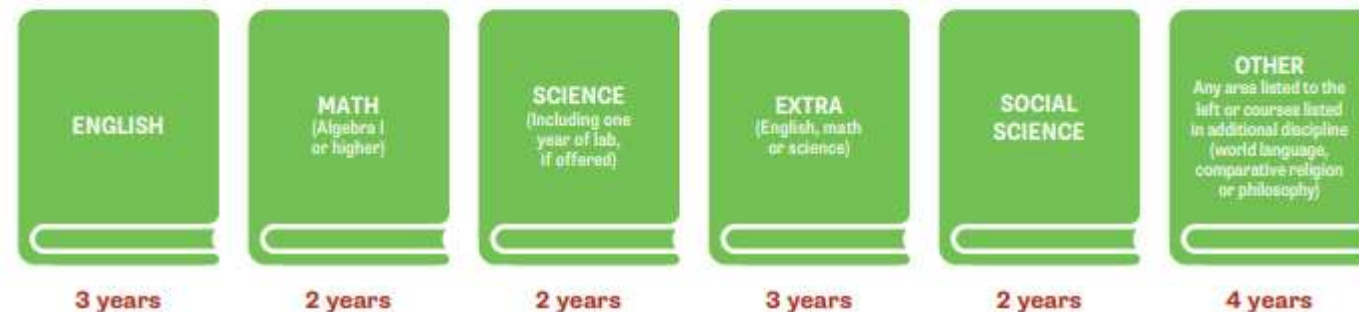
If you are planning to attend a Division III school, you do not need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. Division III schools set their own admissions standards.

Division II Academic Standards

Division II schools require you to meet academic standards. To be eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship in your first year of full-time enrollment, you must meet all the following requirements:



1. Earn 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in the following areas:



2. Earn a minimum 2.2 **core-course GPA**.

3. Ask your high school counselor to upload your **final official transcript** with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

What If I Don't Meet Division II Standards?

If you have not met all the Division II academic standards, you may not compete in your first year of full-time enrollment at a Division II school. However, you will be deemed a partial qualifier. All Division II partial qualifiers may practice and receive an athletics scholarship, but may NOT compete, during their first year of full-time enrollment.

Division II Worksheet

Use the **Division II Worksheet** to assist you in monitoring your progress in meeting NCAA initial-eligibility standards. The Eligibility Center will determine your academic status after you graduate. Remember to check your **high school's list** of NCAA-approved core courses for the classes you have taken or plan to take.



ACADEMIC CERTIFICATION DECISIONS

Academic certifications are required for all college-bound student-athletes planning to compete at an NCAA Division II school. If you're being recruited by a Division II school, below are the most common decisions you may receive once a certification has been completed.

EARLY ACADEMIC QUALIFIER

If you meet **specific criteria** after six semesters of high school, you may be deemed an early academic qualifier for Division II and may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.

QUALIFIER

You may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year of full-time enrollment.

PARTIAL QUALIFIER

You may practice and receive an athletics scholarship, but may NOT compete, during your first year of full-time enrollment.



WHAT DO STUDENTS DO AFTER THEY GRADUATE?

There are many options available to youngsters with undergraduate degrees. Graduate school, professional school, apprenticeships, travel, and business opportunities are just a few. All schools have reputations regarding the way they measure the success of their graduate. What does your child hope to do after college? Will this school support and encourage (or detract from) that goal?

• • • •

"I'm glad I came" is the response of many parents at the end of an intense day of college visiting. The phrase provides a positive bridge that links the diversity of experiences parents across the country can have on their visits. One mother who spent the day at a large mid-western university mused about her past and contemplated her daughter's future. *"I was the first woman physician in our community, a small city in the Midwest. My daughter has decided she also wants to go into medicine. I never realized till I got here that I want more than excellent lab facilities for her. I do not want her to struggle and suffer as much as I did. Being a trailblazer wasn't easy. College, as far as I'm concerned, should provide her with a supportive environment so she doesn't have to fight great odds to be what she wants. I'm glad I came because I get the feeling that this school has that supportive atmosphere as well as excellent facilities."*

For another parent at a New England college, "I'm glad I came" had a different meaning. *"There's a chemistry here that you can't explain. I read the catalog, talked with other parents who had been here, but nothing takes the place of doing it yourself. Whatever happens after this visit, my husband and I will feel that we were involved. We had our eyes and ears open, and we know what our son is getting into."*

A less exhilarated father, one who showed the wear and tear of five campus visits in three days, put it another way: *"I'm glad I came. At least I won't have to go through this again if he transfers; for a parent once is essential, but once is enough."*

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REQUEST FOR COLLEGE INFO

YES - IT IS TIME TO SEND FOR MATERIALS. HERE'S HOW...

SAMPLE EMAIL FOR JUNIORS REQUESTING COLLEGE INFORMATION

Dear Director: *(You do not have to use names here)*

I am a junior at Westlake High School in Thornwood, New York. I am interested in applying to *(Name of college)* for entrance as a freshman in the ____ - ____ school year. I am considering study in _____. Kindly add me to your prospective student list.

I appreciate your assistance. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Your name

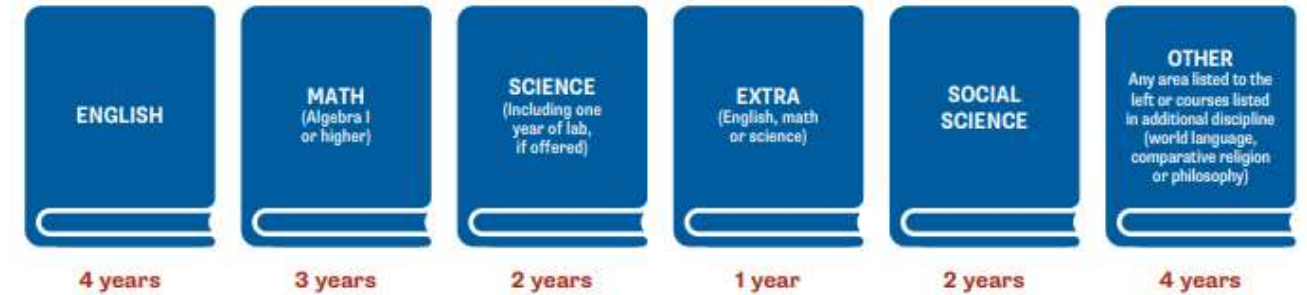
OR: Call the admissions office and ask for an application, course catalog, and any financial information.

Division I Academic Standards

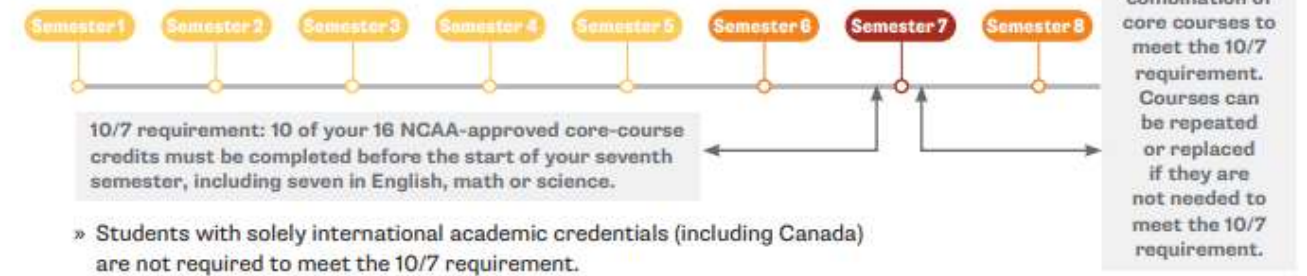
Division I schools require you to meet academic standards. To be eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship in your first year of full-time enrollment, you must meet all the following requirements:



1. Earn 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in the following areas:



2. Complete 10 of your 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits, including seven in English, math or science, before the start of the seventh semester. Once you begin your seventh semester, any course that is needed to meet the 10/7 requirement cannot be replaced or repeated.



3. Complete your 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits in eight academic semesters or four consecutive academic years from the start of ninth grade. If you graduate from high school early, you still must meet core-course requirements.

4. Earn a minimum 2.3 core-course GPA.

5. Ask your high school counselor to upload your final official transcript with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

How to plan your high school courses to meet the 16 core-course requirement:

4 x 4 = 16

9 th GRADE	10 th GRADE	11 th GRADE	12 th GRADE
(1) English (1) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other	(1) English (1) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other	(1) English (1) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other	(1) English (1) Math (1) Science (1) Social Science and/or other
4 CORE COURSES	4 CORE COURSES	4 CORE COURSES	4 CORE COURSES

High School Timeline

9th GRADE REGISTER



- » If you haven't yet, **register** for a free Profile Page account at eligibilitycenter.org for information on NCAA initial-eligibility requirements.
- » Use NCAA Research's **interactive map** to help locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- » Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at eligibilitycenter.org/courselist to ensure you're taking the right courses, and earn the best grades possible!

10th GRADE PLAN



- » If you're being actively recruited by an NCAA school and have a Profile Page account, **transition** it to the required **certification account**.
- » Monitor the **task list** in your NCAA Eligibility Center account for next steps.
- » At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.
- » If you fall behind academically, ask your high school counselor for help finding **approved courses** you can take.

11th GRADE STUDY



- » Ensure your **sports participation** information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
- » Check with your high school counselor to make sure you're on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved **core courses** and graduate on time with your class.
- » Share your **NCAA ID** with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its **institutional request list**.
- » At the end of the school year, ask your high school counselor from each school you attend to upload an official transcript to your Eligibility Center account.

12th GRADE GRADUATE



- » **Request your final amateurism certification** beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account at eligibilitycenter.org.
- » Apply and be accepted to the NCAA school you plan to attend.
- » Complete your final NCAA-approved **core courses** as you prepare for graduation.
- » After you graduate, ask your high school counselor to upload your final **official transcript** with proof of graduation to your Eligibility Center account.

Senior Year College Applications: How To Apply

1. Complete Teacher Recommendation Survey on Naviance. Include all School/community information, grades 9-12. Don't sell yourself short!
2. **Ask 2 academic teachers for letters of recommendation.** It is important to approach the teachers you are asking for letters in person about your request. Be advised, a teacher has the right to decline this request. Once confirmed you must login to your Naviance account and electronically request your teachers to write letters of recommendation for you. It is advised that you include a note in your Naviance electronic request. Keep in mind teachers are inundated with requests so it is important to request letters as soon as possible. If you have application deadlines, it is important for teachers to know this. Lastly, counselors are not permitted to show you a teacher's letter of recommendation.
3. Make sure your **Naviance and Common application profiles are up to date.** No applications can be processed unless this step is complete. **The only way to have your high school information sent to colleges is by using Naviance.**
4. Apply to your schools of choice using the school's online application or the Common Application. Complete all applications to the best of your ability. You can choose to review the applications with your counselor before submitting. Be sure to make an appointment for this service during your study hall and/or lunch. Be sure to carefully fill everything out. Once you have applied online, you must complete the necessary steps on your Naviance account. Please refer to the Naviance eDocs Student Guide on the **REQUIRED** steps you must take to inform your Counselor that you applied to college. These steps include indicating your applications in Naviance as well as completing a short hard copy form that gets handed directly to your Counselor. Upon receiving this form, your counselor will electronically submit your official transcript, counselor letter of recommendation, teacher letters of recommendation, school profile, and related evaluation forms. If there is anything else your college requires our office to submit, please specify that to your Counselor. **BE ADVISED** it can take up to **ONE WEEK** to submit this information, so complete these steps well in advance of your application deadlines.
5. **FORWARD TEST SCORES TO ALL COLLEGES.** Each student is responsible for sending SAT and/or ACT scores to the colleges to which they apply. Westlake High School is **NOT** permitted to send scores or report scores on your transcript. Sending scores is easy and only takes a few moments. There is a fee associated with this. Every college-bound student in every school is required to do this. N.B. College Board (SAT) and ACT Corp both have Score Choice Option. You can choose to hide scores you do not wish to send. It can take up to two weeks for the College Board and ACT to send your scores.
6. If your school requires a **CSS profile** (most private schools do) you must fill this out as close to October 1st as possible. See your counselor for details.
7. **FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid.** This is a necessary process to obtain financial aid and/or student loans. This must be filled out as close to October 1st as possible. There is a very, very helpful Financial Aid workshop in September for your parents to attend. Please see the District Calendar for a specific date/time/place. Also visit www.fafsa.ed.gov for more information on FAFSA.
8. All applications should be submitted electronically two weeks before the deadline. This will ensure that all of your supporting materials are sent in before the deadline. It will also give you ample time to confirm everything was received by the college. Westlake HS asks that all of your applications are submitted by **Dec 1st** in an effort to wrap up the college application season before the holiday break.

Important Follow-up Information...

- It is good to call the admissions office to each school you apply to, to ensure they have received all necessary materials.
- Mid-year & Final transcripts will automatically be sent to the schools you apply to (Midyear) & the school which you attend (Final).
- Inform your counselor every time a college admits, waitlists or denies you.

When in doubt, ask your counselor!

Updated August 2024

WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT



Using eDOCS through ...A Student's Guide

Below is a step-by-step guide on how students can utilize the extremely fast and seamless eDocs program to process their college applications.

Requesting teacher recommendations...

- Sign in to your Naviance account. <http://connection.naviance.com/westlakehs>
- Next, click the "Colleges" tab, then go to "Apply to Colleges."
- Next, click where it says, "letters of recommendation."
- Next, click on "add request."
- **1)** From the drop-down menu, select the teacher who you are requesting a letter from, **2)** select the "general request" button and **3)** Be sure to fill out the "Personal Note" section as it is considered poor etiquette to simply request a letter. It is recommended you opt to send a personal note asking the teacher if they would be interested in writing a letter on your behalf.
- Once complete, click the "submit" button. This will send an email to the teacher inquiring about their interest in writing a letter for you.
- Be sure to also complete the **WHS Teacher Recommendation/Activity Survey** (available on your Naviance account, under the "About Me" tab, then click "Surveys From Your School"). It is required and extremely important that you complete the above survey. Without this info, your teacher will NOT write a letter of recommendation for you. Please know: a teacher has the right to decline your request for a letter.

***** Please note, if this page does not load according to the instructions above, you must clear your browsing history. It is recommended you use Chrome for this application.**

Notifying your Counselor you've applied to college...

- Once you submit **ANY** college application, be sure to immediately complete a College Application Communication Form and hand it directly to your counselor or the Guidance Secretary. (N.B. You **MUST** do this each time you apply to colleges.)

***** IMPORTANT *****

- The College Application Communication Form (CACF) is used to let your counselor know that you applied to a college and to send your transcript, letters of recommendation, and related application materials. Copies of the CACF can be found on our website and in the Guidance & Counseling Department Office. **Do NOT forget to hand this form in!**

—Wait, you're not done yet!—

Be sure to include your applications on Naviance as well.

1. Click on the "Colleges" tab, then "Colleges I am applying to."
2. Next, click the "+" button and enter the name of the college and the application type (regular decision, early action, etc.).
3. Next, click on how you applied (via Common App, etc.).
4. Last, check the box, "I've submitted my application" and click, "Add and Request Transcript (initial)."

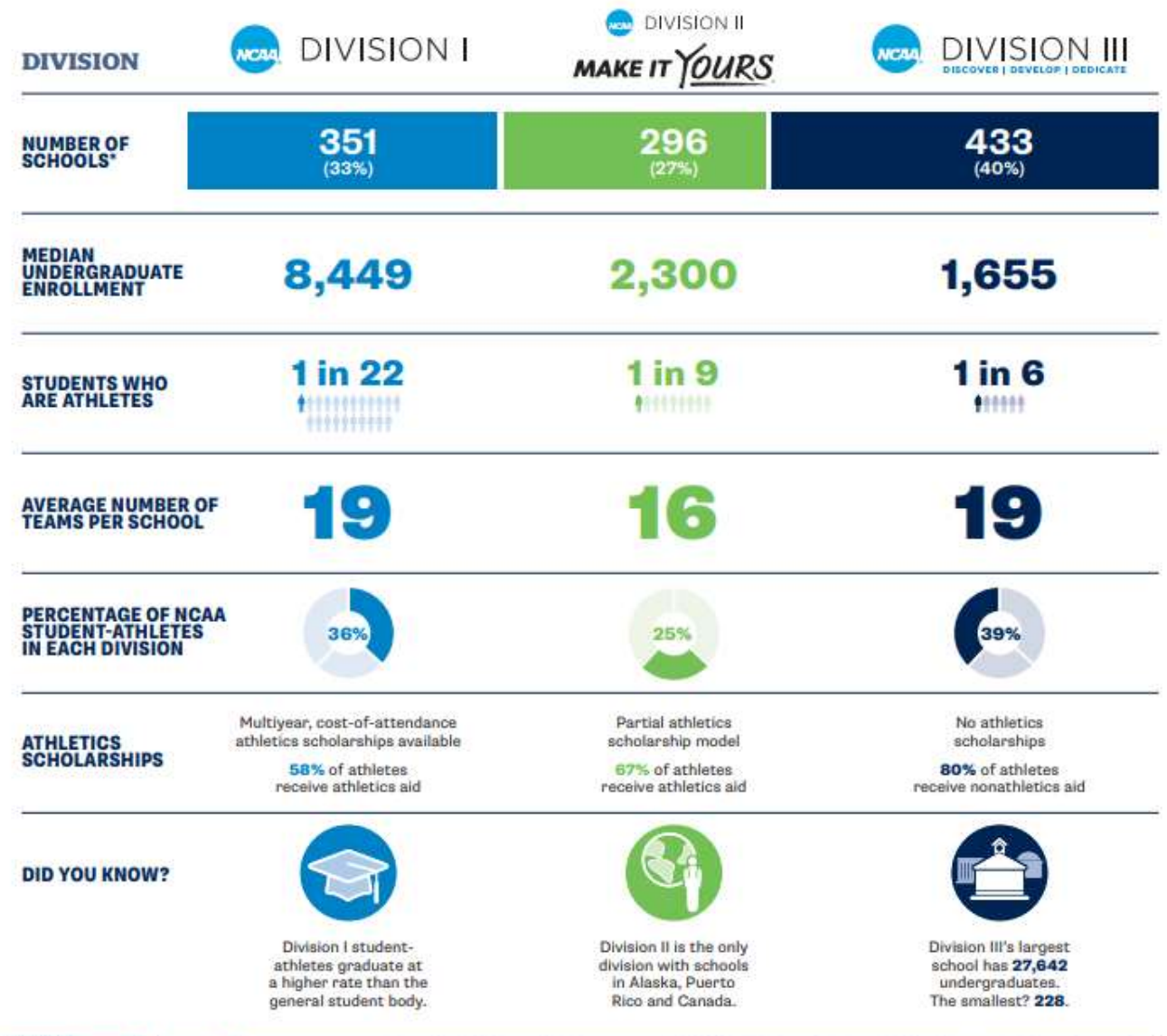
Now, you're done!

If you have any questions at any time, feel free to contact your counselor.

Revised: 09/2024

Our Three Divisions

The NCAA's three divisions were created in 1973 to align like-minded campuses in the areas of fairness, competition and opportunity.



*The number of schools for each division is current as of the 2020-21 academic year. This does not include reclassifying, provisional or exploratory schools. Student-athlete participation numbers include NCAA championship sports only and are current as of the 2021-22 academic year.

How is each division governed?

NCAA schools develop and approve legislation for their own divisions. Groups of presidents and chancellors lead each division in the form of committees with regularly scheduled meetings.

What are the eligibility requirements in each division?

If you want to compete at an NCAA school, you must meet academic and/or amateurism standards set by NCAA members. **Academic** and **amateurism standards** are outlined in this guide and can be found on each division's page on ncaa.org.



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA)

Steps to take, Grade by Grade...

Get Ready. Get Set. Go!

Grade 9

- Ask your counselor for a list of your high school's NCAA core courses to make sure you take the right classes.

Grade 10

- Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at eligibilitycenter.org.

Grade 11

- Check with your counselor to make sure you will graduate on time with the required number of NCAA core courses.
- Take the ACT or SAT and submit your scores to the NCAA using code 9999.
- At the end of the year, ask your counselor to upload your official transcript to the NCAA Eligibility Center.

Grade 12

- Finish your last NCAA core courses.
- Take the ACT or SAT again, if necessary, and submit your scores to the NCAA using code 9999.
- Complete all academic and amateurism questions in your NCAA Eligibility Center account at eligibilitycenter.org.
- After you graduate, ask your counselor to submit your final official transcript with proof of graduation to the NCAA Eligibility Center.

WHS Teacher/Counselor Recommendation & Activity Survey

Description: The below survey is required for any student applying to college and in need of teacher and counselor letters of recommendation. It is NOT optional and MUST BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED AS NEEDED IN NAVIANCE.

Instructions: Complete the survey with as much detailed information about yourself as possible. The more comprehensive your response, the better your teachers and counselor will be able to write a letter of recommendation for you.

List the colleges, application deadlines and application types (EA, ED, Reg, Roll) you are applying to.

	College Name	Application Deadline	Application Type (EA, ED, Regular)
College 1			
College 2			
College 3			
College 4			
College 5			
College 6			
College 7			
College 8			
College 9			
College 10			

- *2. Who is your Guidance Counselor?
- *3. What course of study (major), if known, do you plan to pursue in college?
- *4. Please list any clubs, sports or activities you participated in during high school. Next to each item, please list what grades you participated and any notable achievements (ex: Captain, President, Treasurer, etc.).
- *5. Please list any hobbies or special interests that you enjoy and participate in (piano, fishing, chess, horseback riding, etc.)

*6. Please list any part-time jobs you hold. Next to each item, please list the grade(s) you participated and if full year or seasonal.

*7. What course or subject area do you enjoy the most and why?

*8. What do you consider your greatest strength? Include in your response 3 adjectives that describe you.

*9. Where do you feel you exhibit the most leadership and why?

10. What circumstances, if any, have interfered with your academic performance in high school?

*11. Please list any academic honors or achievements (ex., honor roll, AP Scholar, Most Outstanding in Math, Spanish Honor Society, 3rd Place in Science Fair, etc.)

For students who want to prepare for a career in MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Making your list:

- Look for the best teacher as well as the reputation of the studio for your instrument.
- Ask your current music teachers, other musicians, students, and parents for advice.
- Consider conservatories and university schools of music. Is the academic aspect a priority?
 - Do you want two bachelor's degrees?
- Attend a performing arts college fair. (See the NACAC website)
- For location, consider access to sources of live music - orchestra, jazz, etc.
- Ask questions: Are there any anticipated faculty changes? (Very important!)
- Ask about other opportunities such as jazz if you are interested and not a major.
- Students generally apply to between 5 and 10 schools.

Planning the tour:

- Start by contacting each of the teachers to arrange a trial lesson.
 - This cannot be done after the audition. Fees can range from \$100 to \$250.
- Check the schedules for classes, rehearsals, or performances to observe.
- Try to attend a professional orchestra concert if the members are on the faculty.
 - You may be able to meet them afterward.

When you visit:

- Ask permission to record the lesson; it is very useful in preparing for the audition.
- Find opportunities to speak to and observe the students.
- Look at the performance spaces, practice rooms and bulletin boards.
- Consider sending a follow-up note or email after the lesson.

The application process:

- Check application deadlines early. Many are due on December 1st.
- Applying earlier may give you more of a choice of audition dates.
- Only a few schools have early audition dates and early decision or rolling admissions.
- Keep a chart of deadlines, audition schedules and requirements, etc.
- Some universities have separate applications for the university and the school of music.
- Some conservatories use the Unified Application, which is like the Common Application, but as with the Common Application, most have supplements.
- Some require specific formats for the resume.

The audition:

- Recordings are not required for all instruments.
- All require live auditions, preferably on site. Regional auditions are recorded and reviewed by the faculty. A second visit shows interest and is another chance to meet the faculty.
- Check audition requirements early and plan your repertoire.
- Choose a repertoire that highlights your strengths, not necessarily the most difficult.
- Plan recitals, mock auditions or recording sessions for practice. Enter competitions.
- Dress respectfully but comfortably for the audition. Jackets/ties are not universal.
- Arrive early and accommodate your need for warm-up.
- If given a choice, start with your favorite piece.
- The conversation is also important; this is your interview.

For students who want to study MUSIC within a LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM

Making your list:

- Look at schools with strong music departments and ensemble opportunities.
- Caution: Universities that offer a B<M degree vary widely in opportunities for non-majors.
 - At some, access to teachers and ensembles is limited to the music students.
 - Some offer performance minors.
 - Some invite non-majors to audition for the ensembles within the school of music.
 - Some have non-major orchestras and ensembles.
- Ask about teachers and performance opportunities.
 - Some smaller schools have consortia with other schools.
- Find out whether the school gives credit and/or subsidy for music performance.
 - Some have specific music scholarships

Planning the tour:

- Arrange to speak with someone from the music department when you visit.
- Find a class, performance, or rehearsal to observe.
- You can ask to join an orchestra rehearsal.
- You can request a sample lesson (for a fee) with a teacher when you visit.

When you visit:

- Look into the adequacy and accessibility of practice rooms.
- Look around in the music department; read bulletin boards, posters.
- Talk to the students about their experiences.

The application process:

- Send recordings as supplemental materials to schools that will accept them.
 - Websites have specific instructions under admissions or the music department.
 - Some require it *earlier than their application deadlines*.
 - Some have specific requirements.
 - Schedule the accompanist and recording session. Allow ample time for the process whether recording professionally or with personal equipment.
- Include a music resume of activities since 9th grade. It helps to keep an ongoing record.
 - Teachers
 - Music classes
 - Ensembles, including NYSSMA/WCSMA
 - Major performances
 - Major repertoire
 - Master classes
 - Summer programs
 - Outreach performances
 - Paid performances
 - Awards or honors
 - Teacher experience
- The Common Application has an arts supplement form.

12. Please list any community service you participated in during high school and the # of hours.

13. Please discuss the one activity or experience outside of the classroom that means the most for you and why (ex., football, volunteering at nursing home, skiing in the Alps, taking care of my siblings, etc.)

14. Tell us about anything unique that sets you apart from your peers at Westlake High School.

15. Please let us know about anything else you would like colleges to know about you that is not already covered in this survey.

After submitting your responses, you can return and edit your answers without restrictions.

Please note that the information you provide may be shared with the teachers, counselors, WHS Administration, scholarship organizations that you indicate or apply to.

Westlake High School Guidance & Counseling Dept. Outside Endorsement Form

This form is intended for outside references, former teachers not writing letters of recommendation, advisers, coaches, employers, etc. ...

Please use the below form attached to an email OR feel free to send us a composed email addressing the below information. The email **must** be sent directly by the author of the endorsement information below to the respective counselor (email addresses below).

Counselors Email Address Info (students, be sure to indicate who your counselor is):

Mr. Nicholas P. DiPaolo - ndipaolo@mtplcsd.org
Ms. Colette Magnan - cmagnan@mtplcsd.org

Mrs. Lauren Cody - lcody@mtplcsd.org
Mr. Tim O'Dwyer - todwyer@mtplcsd.org

Student Name: _____

Endorsement Author: _____

Please describe the capacity in which you know the student:

Teacher Coach Employer Mentor Internship/Volunteer Supervisor Other

Please share a few brief examples of the student's success during their time with you. Try to cite specific examples. Comments that you provide may be quoted in our letters of recommendation.

College Preparation for Students with an Interest in **MUSIC**

The first step in the process is to know what degree you want. A BA in music, like most Bas, will involve many courses outside of your major with approximately 12 or so courses in your major. A BM is essentially a professional degree, and the course balance will be the opposite. Most of your courses will be degree-related courses: private lessons, solo classes, ensembles, composition, music history, music theory, aural skills, world music, piano for non-pianists, etc. If you are planning a performance career, you are probably seeking a Bachelor of Music.

5-year double degree program (BA/BM) are available at most universities and some conservatories which have arrangements with other colleges. This gives you the advantage of being able to experience both tracks without committing early on. It is generally easy to withdraw from one if you become focused on the other. Most students who begin as double degree candidates end up completing only one of the degrees. If you are interested, ask about the logistics. Scheduling and location are important factors in determining how manageable it will be, particularly in the paired institutions.

If you are going for a BM or double degree, it is an entirely different process from the one that you undertake with your school counselor. To begin with, you will have a different college list. You are looking for a teacher for the next 4 years, not just an institution. Instead of university reputation, you will prioritize the choice of teacher and the reputation and postgraduate outcomes of the studio as well as location, size, and cost/financial aid. Ask your music teachers, other musicians, students, and parents to recommend programs.

A degree in music education is required to teach music in elementary or secondary school.

Please see the specific advice that follows for both tracks.

College Research:

- There are college guides that specialize in universities that offer degrees in Art and Design, (BA and BFA programs). They also list the art specialties within the programs. This is helpful in narrowing down your search.
- Universities have terrific websites that include almost everything you need to know about the programs including course titles and descriptions.
- Decide if you prefer an art school or a university with a strong art department, particularly if you plan to minor or double major in another subject that is not available in a specialized setting such as an art school.
- Check the quality of equipment and facilities at each school, as well as the number and variety of art classes offered. Are the professors currently exhibiting and have they received recognition in their respective fields?
- Visit, visit, visit! It is important to see the studios, facilities, and students at work. When scheduling a visit to a college, make a separate appointment for a tour of the art building and meet with an art faculty member. This is not part of the usual campus tour. You can also request to meet with a student in the program. Most admission reps cannot answer your detailed questions about the art curriculum at their school. It is a specialty, and an art faculty member is your best contact.

Examples of universities with comprehensive BA/BFA programs:

- SUNY Buffalo
- SUNY Fredonia
- SUNY New Paltz
- Alfred University
- Syracuse University
- University of Delaware
- University of Michigan
- Boston University
- Carnegie Mellon
- Hartwick
- Hobart and William Smith
- Pennsylvania State, University Park Campus
- University of Maryland, College Park

Application Process:

You will actually go through a double application process for admission to schools of Art and Design in a university. Be sure to request the art department's application in addition to the regular admission application. Besides an art portfolio, the art department has its own criteria. The art application may include an additional essay, and they vary from school to school. Allow sufficient time to prepare your applications since you will be writing two essays for each application.

Mailing and follow up:

- Check the mailing address and contact information for submitting portfolios. These are usually different than the mailing address for your application. Often, portfolios are submitted electronically.
- Mail your portfolio "Registered Return Receipt". Include a self-addressed return envelope for the return of your portfolio.
- Call the art department at each school to be sure your portfolio has been received. Check with admissions to be sure all your other information has been received as well, e.g., SAT scores, letters of recommendation, transcripts, etc. Usually, the schools receive the information piecemeal, and it is entered into the applicant's file. In order not to delay the process, it is best to be sure the college has everything it should have received.

Early Admissions Plans

These plans have been introduced by some colleges to assist themselves in admitting students who have committed to a particular college as their "first choice." The colleges take this commitment very seriously, so you should be very careful before applying under one of these plans.

1. **EARLY DECISION PLANS** are offered by many of the more competitive colleges. By participating in a college's plan, you are committing yourself to attend that school, if they accept you. Colleges exchange their Early Decision lists so do NOT apply ED to more than one. Colleges will deny you on this basis alone. You are agreeing to the following:
 - to submit an early decision application to only one school.
 - to attend if admitted.
 - to immediately withdraw any and all regular decision applications to other colleges upon notification of acceptance.
 - to know and abide by the specific details of your college's plan.
 - the only exception to your commitment will be if you applied for need-based aid and do not receive an adequate package.
2. **EARLY ACTION PLANS**. In most ways these plans work like the early decision plans and carry the same responsibilities. The early action plans are different than early decision, in that you are not obligated to attend if accepted. Therefore, upon acceptance you do not have to withdraw your other regular decision applications. The distant cousin of Early Action is Restrictive Early Action to which you can only apply to one school using Early Action.
3. **ROLLING ADMISSIONS**. Schools will accept applications as early as mid-September and will process them upon receipt and render a decision.

YOU, YOUR COUNSELOR, AND EARLY ADMISSION PLANS: When your counselor processes your application, you are involving Westlake High School in your early admission commitment to the college. Our counselors will respect these plans; therefore, do not ask your counselor to process more than one early admission application (early decision). Do not expect your counselor to support you with the colleges if you do not follow the guidelines or violate your commitment. We accept the premise that these plans are only for seniors who have formed a definite preference for one college or university.

**REMEMBER: YOUR COMPLETED EARLY ADMISSION APPLICATION
MUST BE SUBMITTED AND YOUR COUNSELOR NOTIFIED
2 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE DEADLINE.**

How to Handle a College Admissions Deferral

Applying to college either Early Decision or early Action results in three typical outcomes: students can be (1) admitted, (2) denied or (3) deferred. The first two outcomes are straightforward, and students know for sure whether they are “in” or “out.” Being deferred, however, means that an application will be reconsidered in the regular application pool and a decision will be rendered at a later date.

Some students who are deferred consider themselves rejected, but this is not the case. It is important to keep in mind that the college’s admissions committee was sufficiently impressed with your credentials and application to give you a second review by moving you into the regular applicant pool. While a deferral usually means additional months of waiting, there is still a chance of being granted admission. In addition, the binding contract signed as part of an Early Decision application is broken once a student is deferred, and the student’s free to consider other offers of admission and compare financial aid packages. While disappointment in being deferred is a reasonable reaction, maintaining a positive attitude and undertaking the following constructive measures can sometimes lead to a positive admission outcome.

1. **Contact the admissions office to seek their advice.** You may want to email or call the admissions counselor responsible for recruiting students from your high school and ask what steps you can take to enhance your candidacy for admission. You most likely will be asked to have your school counselor submit mid-year senior grades. It is important therefore to keep your grades consistently strong, as a college may even request grades achieved during the 3rd quarter. The admissions staff may also ask for additional test scores or that you provide other information (see # 2).
2. **Submit to the college or university a well-written letter.** Begin the letter by reaffirming that the institution is still your first choice and that if accepted, you will attend, if that is in fact the case. Add to the letter any updates that were not previously part of your application file, such as recent awards or recognitions, new clubs, or activities in which you have become involved, leadership positions you have assumed, academic challenge/s recently undertaken, etc.
3. **Touch base with your interviewer.** Let the person with whom you interviewed know you were deferred. Your interviewer may offer some worthwhile suggestions or may even send a letter or email to the admissions office further recommending you. If you had not interviewed previously, contact admissions and schedule an interview, even if it is deemed non-evaluative, as this further demonstrates your interest and affords you another personal contact at the college or university.
4. **Consider requesting an additional letter of recommendation.** Since the formal letters of recommendation previously submitted to your ED or EA college or university were from teachers who most likely taught you prior to senior year, you can ask a senior-year teacher to write a letter on your behalf stressing your current progress. One such additional letter is sufficient.
5. **Review your college list and apply to other schools.** For many students, a deferral is a wake-up call. Make sure you are applying to the right mix of schools, including a sufficient number of colleges where there is the likelihood that you will be offered admission.

College Preparation for Students with an Interest in **ART & DESIGN**

During sophomore year, begin researching colleges that are strong in the art specialty of your choice. College art departments vary in their courses and specialties. They have different portfolio requirements. As building a good portfolio is time consuming, it is best to know these requirements and begin preparing the portfolio early. Plan to include at least 20 pieces of your best work. Some schools want fewer than 20, so you will have to eliminate.

Suggestions for developing a good portfolio:

- Experiment with a variety of mediums - this will help you to find a medium you prefer, i.e., graphic design vs. photography
- Enroll in art classes at schools outside of your high school to gain a broader experience (See your Counselor for details)
- Study privately with one teacher who can help you determine your area of specialty and help you develop your style.

Possibilities for further studies:

- International Center of Photography (ICP) in NYC: classes for teenagers
- The Art Workshop (SUNY): Westchester County Center
- Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in NYC: weekend “Saturday Live” classes
- North Westchester Arts Center, Mt. Kisco
- MOMA: weekly classes
- Art Students League NYC
- Purchase College: summer program
- School of visual Arts, NYC: summer program
- New York Foundation for the Arts

Portfolio Preparation:

- Include a broad range of mediums to indicate your range
- Follow guidelines, schools are fussy
- Determine if a school wants slides of your work or if you can submit your portfolio electronically, which is less costly.
- Select a reputable photo studio to shoot your work. Good slides are critical. The competition is tough, and you want your work to shine above all others.
- Label the slides per school directions. School requirements can vary.
- An attachment listing each piece of work will be requested. Check the schools’ directions for completing the attachment as the information often varies.

41. How much time is involved in processing the application?
42. When can I expect to hear from you concerning my admissions status?
43. What are the deposit requirements?
44. Can deposit extensions be arranged?
45. What percentages of your students are on financial aid?
46. How does one apply for financial aid?
47. Is there a financial aid application deadline?
48. What is the average financial aid package?
49. Do you offer scholarships on academics alone?
50. What is the requirement to be considered for academic scholarships?
51. When should I expect to receive word from the Financial Aid Office?
52. What subjects would I be required to take?
53. How many electives would I have?
54. Do you have independent study?
55. Can a student take a course pass/fail?
56. Do you accept CLEP exams or Advanced Placement Exams?
57. How do you set up your calendar year?
58. What counseling services are available?
59. What is your attrition rate?
60. To what do you attribute your attrition?
61. Are any new building projects slated to begin within the next few years?
62. How would you rate the academic, social, and athletic reputation of the school?
63. How would you describe one of your average students?
64. What makes your college any different or any better than College “_____”?
65. Given my academics, what are my chances for admission?

If you are applying to a special program for Learning Disabled Students, you may also be asked some of these questions:

- What is your learning disability?
- How does it cause you difficulty?
- How do you compensate for it?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- What writing classes did you have in high school?
- What kind of assistance did you get in high school?
- What services do you think you will need in college?
- What accommodations do you think you will need?
- Do you plan to take a full load?
- How do you plan your study time?
- How much time do you study each day?
- Have you ever taken a study skills class?
- What skills did you learn?
- Are you willing to work harder than other students to earn a college degree?

ACT vs SAT

WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE & COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

ACT <i>(Digital or Paper)</i>	Digital SAT
Time: 3 hours, 35 mins (with optional science & essay sections)	Time: 2 hours, 14 minutes
4 Sections: English, Math, Reading, plus an optional science and essay section	2 Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and Writing (2 modules) • Math (2 modules)
Score: 1-36 (based on an average of sub sections scores, also 1-36) Optional writing score of 2-12, not included in overall composite score	Score: Out of 1600, 800 for Math, 800 for Evidence-based Reading & Writing
Wrong answer penalty: No penalty	Wrong answer penalty: No penalty
Math content: Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2 & Trigonometry	Math content: Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Problem Solving and Data Analysis
Calculator: Permitted on entire math section	Calculator: Permitted on entire math section (on screen calculator available).
General focus: Broad range of content and skills	General focus: In-depth analysis of evidence and content
Multiple Choice: 4 answer choices	Multiple choice: 4 answer choices

COLLEGE TESTING PROGRAM FOR 2025 – 2026

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Registration for SAT I and ACT are done online at collegeboard.com or act.org
2. Consult websites for the nearest test location.
3. Westlake High School's SCHOOL CODE is: 3 3 5 5 6 3.

+ Different tests are required by different colleges; in addition, specific tests may be more beneficial to certain students than others. For assistance in determining what test to take please contact your counselor.

AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING (ACT)

2025- 2026 TESTING DATES

September	6	2025
October	18	2025
December	13	2025
February	14	2026
April	11	2026
June	13	2026
July	11	2026

EXPLANATION OF TESTS: (+)

ACT – American College Test for juniors & seniors.

PSAT I – Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test for sophomores and juniors.

SAT I – Scholastic Assessment Test for juniors & seniors.

SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT)

2025 – 2026 TESTING DATES

August	23	2025
September	13	2025
October	4	2025
November	8	2025
December	6	2025
March	14	2026
May	2	2026
June	6	2026

ADDITIONAL TESTING INFORMATION

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)
Testing date is **Saturday, October 11, 2025**, [here at Westlake High School](#).

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) EXAMINATIONS: May 4-8 and 11-15, 2026

TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TOEFL) – See your Counselor.
These tests are administered at National Sylvan Testing Centers and can be taken at any time during the year. This is a computer-based testing program. Information bulletins are available in the Guidance Office or online at www.ets.org/toefl.

ALL IDENTIFIED JUNIORS & SENIORS: The SAT and ACT with special accommodations are available at Westlake. See your Counselor and Resource Room Teacher for details.

A student should come to an admissions interview prepared in order to ensure the interview is meaningful. Hopefully, the questions listed here will be of assistance in your preparation. Sample questions you might want to ask at an admissions office interview:

1. What is the size of your student body?
2. Where do your students come from?
3. What is the male/female ratio?
4. What is the student/faculty ratio?
5. What is the average class size?
6. Where are the college's strongest majors?
7. What are the curriculum's strengths and weaknesses?
8. What are the college's most popular majors?
9. How strong is the major that you are interested in?
10. Is your selected major a popular one?
11. What percentages of the program graduated applies and is accepted to graduate school?
12. To what graduate schools are they accepted?
13. Does the school have any noted alumni?
14. How many alumni are there?
15. Are there any noted alumni graduated from your particular major?
16. Is there an active alumni program and is it successful?
17. What is the job market like in your field of interest?
18. Has the school been successful in the area of job placement?
19. Where do your graduates get jobs?
20. In the program you have chosen, what are the job placements?
21. What is the average starting salary?
22. Do you have an active placement office?
23. What percentage of your faculty has PhD's, MA's, etc.?
24. What percentage of your faculty are originally graduates of the institution?
25. Are any of your faculty published?
26. What are the residency requirements?
27. How are the dormitories run?
28. Do you have your choice of residence halls?
29. Can you request a specific roommate?
30. What are the housing requirements?
31. Are you a commuter or campus resident?
32. What is the social life like?
33. Are you a suitcase campus?
34. What is the availability of transportation?
35. What is your average SAT and class rank?
36. How selective are you in the admissions process?
37. Has the Admissions Office been successful in its recruitment effort?
38. What are your future expectations in regard to the college's enrollment?
39. What do you look for most in a prospective student?
40. Do you have early admissions?

College Interview Questions

Below are questions typically asked in a college interview. Plan what you will say in response to these questions and practice saying your answers out loud before the interview. Also think of questions that you have about the school, as the interviewers will probably ask you what questions you have.

1. Why do you want to go to college?
2. What are your career goals?
3. Why should this school accept you?
4. What kinds of jobs have you held?
5. Do you intend to work while you are in college?
6. How did you first become interested in us?
7. Do you know any students on campus?
8. Are you acquainted with any of our alumni?
9. What kind of student have you been?
10. What is your class rank?
11. Have you taken the College Board Tests?
12. What were your scores on the College Entrance Exams?
13. What are you planning to major in?
14. Why have you chosen this field of study?
15. What courses are you presently taking?
16. What would you like to do after college?
17. What is your favorite subject?
18. Are you interested in writing or music or art?
19. What interests, hobbies or activities do you have outside the classroom?
20. What books have you read - not required by classroom teachers - during the past year?
21. Do you prefer science fiction or mysteries?
22. What subjects do you dislike most and why?
23. Who was the greatest influence in your investigating our college?
24. Have you talked to your Guidance Counselor?
25. What other schools have you applied to?
26. What do you like best about the college?
27. What are you looking for in a college education?
28. Are we your first-choice school?
29. What other colleges have you visited?
30. What do you do in the summer?
31. How many are in your family?
32. Do you plan to apply for financial aid?
33. Are you interested in scholarship monies?
34. 35. Do you have any brothers or sisters at another college?
35. What grade would you expect to receive on the college level?
36. What questions would you like to ask me?

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS AT SELECTIVE COLLEGES

Understanding the Criteria in Order to Manage the Process Intelligently

Many college candidates who are not familiar with the admissions process at selective colleges unwittingly handicap themselves. Conversely, those who make themselves familiar with all the steps of the process, who understand how admissions materials are used, and who prepare all forms properly give themselves an advantage in the admissions race. To put it another way, the majority of candidates do themselves a disservice by not paying sufficient attention to the quality of the materials they submit or devoting sufficient time to the preparation of their application materials.

Not all colleges are equally selective, but all ask candidates to go through an application process that has certain basic steps. Although different colleges solicit varying amounts of information, all colleges require candidates to complete a Personal Application Form, take certain standardized tests, and arrange to have their college counselor prepare a Secondary School Report. Selective colleges require further that candidates have teachers submit evaluations. Candidates may also be encouraged to schedule an interview with an admissions officer or a graduate of the college in question, as well as to ask two or three people whom they know well for letters of recommendation. Some colleges even require a video supplement!!

The admissions process at selective colleges is undeniably subjective; but because it is, applicants can influence the process to a certain extent by making certain that the quality of information in their admission folder is first rate. Admissions officers are interested in the qualitative nature of your achievements as well as in the extent of the support you receive from teachers, counselor, or friends who write on your behalf. This is in contrast, of course, to the admissions process in institutions where decisions are rigidly tied to a specified grade point average (GPA) and a predetermined performance level on either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing Program exam (ACT).

This document is designed to be a general guide--almost an elaborate checklist--to help students who are applying to college exercise some control over the process. The points discussed are organized in the order in which admissions officers in a typical applicant folder at Princeton file the forms and reports. Initially, I will discuss the importance of the information presented on the Personal Application Form. Next, I will make a few suggestions with regard to the submission of a Personal Statement or supplementary material, such as recordings of your musical performances, digital prints of your artwork, or copies of your research papers. In this way, you will be able to see your own application package through the eyes of an admissions committee, and you can ascertain at each step of the process that you have done all you could to present yourself fairly to the colleges that interest you.

Personal Application Form

All colleges require candidates to complete a Personal Application Form. Since selective colleges are concerned about the quality of your nonacademic contributions, the information you present on this form will have a direct bearing on the nonacademic rating you receive from those reading your folder. Most likely, you will be asked to provide information about the environment in which you live and study and about those nonacademic activities that are most important to you.

A. Background Data

Colleges that are oriented to evaluating the nonacademic side of an applicant will ask a series of background questions. What secondary schools did you attend? What were the colleges--if any--of your parents? How are your parents employed? What is their marital status? This type of information helps admissions officers gain an understanding of your everyday environment. If your family has encountered a number of problems, the admissions officer would be interested in how this affected your performance in school. For instance, if you come from a home in which there has been a divorce, it would not be surprising to see a decline in your grades during the time that your parents' marriage was dissolving.

The Personal Application Form also asks students to identify the secondary schools they attended. A switch from one school to another may be difficult for some, particularly for those who were happy and successful before the move. Again, a slight grade decline may be more a reflection of adjustment than of indifference. Admissions officers respond favorably to candidates who overcome adversity rather than use their problems as an excuse for failure.

Information on parental occupation gives an indication of the nature and extent of your opportunities, both academic and nonacademic. Generally, admissions committees look with favor on applicants who have shown initiative and who have demonstrated leadership capabilities. Candidates who have been given a wealth of opportunities but have amassed a veritable laundry list of undistinguished activities are not as compelling as applicants with few advantages but who present solid achievements. Also, youngsters for whom part-time work is essential should realize that this can be a plus in the admissions process. Signs of independence and maturity are recognized and valued by admissions committees. In essence, achievements and activities are evaluated in the context of applicants' lives and educational experiences.

B. Degree Selection

Almost all application forms ask candidates to specify the academic degree they wish to pursue, e.g., business, liberal arts, engineering, education, nursing, agriculture, etc. If students are unsure, they are instructed to check "undecided." This single act can influence the admissions decision.

Those who are wrestling with a choice between a professional school and a liberal arts major may place themselves at a disadvantage in the admissions process if they indicate they are "undecided." The faculty members at professional schools tend to prefer applicants who are committed to their fields. Furthermore, if an institution asks you to write a special statement indicating why you are interested in engineering, or agriculture, or business, consider this request very seriously. Your comments will be read carefully in an effort to assess your motivation to pursue a career in that field.

Most liberal arts programs, however, are designed to provide students with a breadth of knowledge in a number of fields as well as depth in one or two. In the liberal arts, being undecided about which department to major in is not a liability; it is almost expected.

C. Extracurricular Activities

As stated previously, most selective colleges use nonacademic criteria to distinguish between candidates. Because these institutions want to build a class composed of people with a diversity of talents and backgrounds, they rate each applicant on nonacademic as well as academic criteria. A few of the colleges give both ratings equal weight in the admissions process. Given this, applicants to selective schools should provide as much information as possible about their nonacademic achievements. Simply listing what you do outside the classroom is not sufficient. How many hours a week do you devote to these activities? What is your level of competence in an activity, whether it is sport or drama or music? Be specific with regard to actual performance. For example, if you are on the newspaper staff, tell us how many issues are published; if you are a varsity swimmer, tell us what your times are; if you are in a club, tell us about its activities. Do not, however, present a series of generalizations, for that will be regarded as padding and do little to

INTERVIEW DONT'S

- chew gum
- be late (if it is beyond your control call ahead and let them know)
- complain or make excuses
- swear or use language that is too colloquial
- exhibit a negative attitude
- respond with one-word answers
- discuss other colleges or make comparisons
- fidget or slump in your seat
- pretend to be someone you are not

TYPICAL INTERVIEW TOPICS

Every interviewer had his or her favorite questions, but there are some common areas that are covered in most interviews. These include:

- your high school experience
- your personal traits, relationships with others and your family background
- your interests outside the classroom - hobbies, extracurricular activities, summer vacations, movies you have seen, books you have read, etc.
- your values and goals and how you view the world around you
- your impressions of the college you are visiting
- special circumstances that may have affected your grades
- answers to your questions

ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS SUCH AS

- Tell me about your high school. How long have you been attending? What are the students like? Do you like your high school? What would you preserve or change about it?
- Which courses have you liked the most? Which have you liked the least? Which have been the most challenging?
- How well do you think your school has prepared you for your future studies?
- How would you describe yourself as a student?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- If I asked your family or friends, how would they describe you?
- What has been your most simulating intellectual experience?
- Have you decided on a major?
- What extracurricular activity have you been involved in the most?
- Do you have any regrets? If you could do something over, what would that be?
- What are you most looking forward to in college?
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

The Admissions Interview

Each college has its own interview procedure. Some have evaluative interviews which are utilized in making admissions decisions, others offer more informational interviews, and some do not offer any interviews. Interviews may be conducted by an admissions counselor, an alumnus who lies in our area, or a current student on campus. Be sure to contact each college for specific information regarding its policy on interviews and to schedule one in advance, if appropriate.

WHY AN INTERVIEW

It is wise to have an interview whenever possible. This is your opportunity to personalize the process. It allows a college or university to get a more complete picture of you as a person that cannot be conveyed through a paper file. You should try to interview at those schools that are of real interest to you and are realistic choices. It gives you a chance to learn in more detail about academics and campus life and gives you an opportunity to get questions answered to help you determine if the school is a good match. It also shows that you are very interested in the college.

ARRANGING AN INTERVIEW

Schedule all interviews well in advance by contacting the admissions office or accessing the college website. Schools will have different policies about when they conduct interviews (e.g., some will allow you to interview at any time while others want you to first submit your application). If you cannot attend an interview appointment, be sure to call and cancel. A cancellation will not be held against you, but a missed appointment could have a negative impact on your application.

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Know the time and location of the interview and plan to arrive early. Do prior research: review the website, read the brochures, speak to current students. Write down a list of questions that you want to ask (remember, you do not want to ask questions that are easily answered by reviewing the literature or visiting the website). Take time to think about your strengths and weaknesses, your extracurricular activities and hobbies, and be prepared to speak about them in a positive way. If there are special circumstances that have affected your academic record, positive or negative, you may want to bring them up at an interview, as this can give the college a better perspective on you and your experiences. Practice interviews are helpful to some students. Ask your guidance counselor to conduct a mock interview with you or have a family friend role play with you.

WHAT TO WEAR

Dress neatly and comfortably and in a manner that reflects who you are. Jeans are fine (as long as they are not ripped) but steer clear of baseball hats, sneakers, and shorts.

INTERVIEW DO'S

- establish eye-contact
- show enthusiasm
- use your natural conversational style
- listen attentively
- exhibit a positive attitude
- be open and honest
- ask questions
- be specific and give concise responses
- BY YOURSELF!

separate you from other applicants. Simply be honest and thorough in the information you present about yourself; remember that admissions committees will be reviewing the folders of many other applicants with activities and positions similar to yours.

If the Personal Application Form includes a space for you to write about your nonacademic interests, prepare this statement with care, for what you say is important. Basically, your comments give admissions officers an opportunity to evaluate your writing and to make an estimation of your ability to contribute to the nonacademic life of the college.

Increasingly, secondary school students are employed on a part-time basis. Admissions officers would like to know if your job contributed to your development, but this knowledge is difficult to obtain if the only information you provide is the job title and number of hours worked per week. It is to your advantage to describe the jobs you held and to indicate what you learned about yourself and others through the experience. Comment, if appropriate, on how these jobs influenced your choice of a career or college major.

Sometimes candidates are advised to submit their own resumes in lieu of completing the extracurricular activity section of the Personal Application Form. The wisdom of this is questionable. Valuable information can be buried in a resume and overlooked by an admissions officer who is reading hundreds of folders and who is accustomed to looking for certain information at specific spots on the application form. Also, extensive lists of relatively insignificant accomplishments, e.g., riflery or swimming awards won at summer camp when you were twelve years old, tend to obscure the more recent, and presumably more impressive, achievements. In sum, give colleges information about your nonacademic achievements, but use the form that has been provided and focus on those activities that are of real significance to you. A resume can be attached in addition to the information provided on the activity section.

College Counselor Report

All candidates must make arrangements to have their secondary school transcripts sent to the colleges to which they are applying. In addition, many colleges ask the college counselor to write an evaluation of the applicant. Generally, the more selective the college, the greater the emphasis placed on this evaluation. The counselor's statement would unquestionably be the most important document in the folder if all counselors provided information on the following issues: the candidate's commitment to intellectual work; the quality of the academic program that the candidate pursued; noteworthy contributions to the school or the local community; and personal qualities such as maturity, sensitivity, concern for others, and sense of humor.

While you are not responsible for the preparation of this report, you can exercise a certain amount of control over the information that is presented. You should not be reluctant to prepare information about yourself for the counselor; ideally, this information should be organized in accordance with the instructions on the forms provided by the colleges to which you are applying. The counselor as the basis for a comprehensive, detailed, and anecdotal report can use lists that you prepare of your activities, achievements, and interests. Moreover, you have the right to ask the counselor to elaborate upon a certain aspect of your record, whether it is your academic achievement, your character, or an extracurricular activity of particular significance to you.

Reports that are especially valuable provide information in at least the following four areas: your socioeconomic background; your personality, character, and interpersonal skills; your academic performance, including aberrations or extraordinary achievements; and your nonacademic contributions, again with an emphasis on unusual achievements. The college counselor may be the only person in the admissions process who has a chance to paint a complete written portrait of you. Without this portrait, admissions officers must look elsewhere for this information; if it is not provided, the applicant is not likely to fare as well in the admissions process of the selective colleges.

Teacher Reports

Colleges with admissions policies that consider more than grade point averages and rank in class will probably ask you to submit one or two teacher reports. These are useful in evaluating your academic potential, particularly if you are from a large school and are not well known by the college counselor.

As with other reports, the quality of teacher reports varies. Teachers are normally not as familiar with the admissions process as college counselors. Moreover, they may feel that their primary responsibility is to prepare lessons and correct papers, not to write innumerable reports on the academic and personality characteristics of their students. Nonetheless, admissions officers value good information from this source. The following questions are typical of those found on Teacher Report Forms:

- a. What are the first words that come to your mind to describe this applicant?
- b. Assess, if possible, the candidate's commitment to intellectual pursuits and evaluate his or her performance in your academic area.
- c. If you are familiar with the applicant's performance in extracurricular areas, please assess his or her competence, talent, and leadership.
- d. We are interested in anything you can tell us about the applicant's personal qualities.

The worst teacher report I have ever seen was from a person who wrote the same recommendation for all the applicants. He simply photocopied his statement and filled in the name of each candidate where appropriate!

How can a candidate ensure that the teacher will prepare a useful report? I wish the question were as easy to answer as it is to ask. Teacher reports are not usually available for your inspection. Despite this, you can take some steps to prevent the submission of a bland or uninformative statement. For instance, do not assume that because a teacher likes you, he or she will prepare a comprehensive statement. Ask guidance counselors or

highly respected faculty members which teachers are likely to write complete reports. Also, ask teachers if they are willing to support your application. There is a real difference between the following questions: "Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?" and "Would you be willing to write a supportive letter for me to College X?"

Unquestionably there are teachers, just as there are secondary school counselors, whose recommendations carry a considerable amount of weight with admissions committees. Because certain teachers have provided colleges with accurate verbal portraits of their students in the past, their comments are highly respected and play an important role in an admissions decision. Do not assume, however, that a new teacher cannot be helpful. An admissions committee respects all statements that are balanced, thoughtful, incisive, and factual.

Interviews

It is not at all uncommon for applicants to be confused about the role of the college interview. This confusion exists because different colleges use the interview for different purposes. Some, for instance, regard interviews as an opportunity to recruit students. With these institutions, the applicant can expect to have the programs and offerings enthusiastically described by the admissions officer.

Essay Topics/Prompts

The below essay prompts are used on the Common Application. Students are asked to write their main college essay addressing one of the prompts. Keep in mind, one of the prompts is "Topic of Your Choice" so in the end, any topic will suffice as long as it follows the advice we gave in the previous section about writing your essay.

Main college essays for the Common Application must be no longer than 650 words.

Below is the full set of Common App essay prompts for 2025-2026:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

College Essay Supplements

In addition to the college essay - there are other written tasks on most applications. They can be in the form of supplements - which are questions specific to each college. The college essay tends to be a broad topic that anyone can answer, with endless topics to choose from.

Supplemental essays are **specific to each college**, so they usually want to know your opinions about their school...such as..." why do you want to attend Providence College?" and/or "Tell us why you have chosen your major?" Always have some **background info** on the schools in which you are applying so you can give well-informed answers. You do not want to be among the thousands of students writing...the campus is beautiful. Know specifics about the school and major to which you are applying. It will make for a stronger supplemental essay.

Supplements are usually short in length, which means you need to get your point across briefly. It is very important that supplements and short answer questions are well thought out and written grammatically correct as well.

Other institutions will evaluate candidates during the interview. You will be asked about your academic record, your test scores, and your extracurricular achievements. The admissions officer will try to determine how you compare with the applicant pool of that college, and the subsequent interview report will probably contain comments about your chances of admission. Occasionally, the admissions officers who are trying to evaluate you will ask an unusual or surprising question. Since there is no correct answer to such questions as "if you were stranded on a deserted island, what three books would you want with you?" the interviewer can be assumed to be interested primarily in how you handle the situation. To what extent do you become flustered? To what extent can you marshal your facts quickly? And to what extent do you control your anxiety?

A third type of interview, and one that is characteristic of most selective institutions, involves the mutual exchange of information. Since these colleges make nonacademic as well as academic distinctions among candidates, they have adopted an admissions process that solicits information about the extracurricular achievements, personal character, and interpersonal skills of the applicants. Making valid comparisons on nonacademic criteria among applicants is, however, vastly more difficult than comparing academic records. There is no standardized test that gives admissions officers an accurate assessment of your integrity, motivation, or sense of humor. As a result, admissions officers refer to a variety of sources to obtain information about your personal strengths. As mentioned previously, teachers and college counselors provide information of this sort, and applicants too can discuss their nonacademic interests and achievements on the Personal Application Form. The interview is just another source of information about you and about how you use extracurricular time. What nonacademic interests do you pursue?

To what extent are you committed to a narrow or broad range of interests? Of course, these questions cannot be answered definitively in an interview, but observations can be made and subsequently compared with the comments others make about your candidacy.

If you have an "informational" or "evaluative" type of interview, do not hesitate to elaborate upon your nonacademic interests. Do not assume the admissions officer is clairvoyant; if you have accomplished something significant - however you define it - discuss it. Whether you cross the fine line between honesty and egocentricity really depends on how you deliver the information. You will also be given the opportunity to ask questions. Think about what you want to learn from the interview. Test out your assumptions. Talk about how your friends have stereotyped that particular institution. To what extent is this stereotype accurate? Try, however, to avoid asking questions. Do not be glib. Many institutions today are overwhelmed with interview requests and admissions officers may be on a tight schedule. Candidates who ramble on about nothing of significance, or who spontaneously think of questions that are easily answered in the catalog, help themselves not at all.

Not all your interviews will fit neatly into one of the three interview types. Knowing that there are recruitment, evaluative, and information-exchange interviews, you should be able to ascertain quite quickly how the interview is being used at the colleges you visit. Adjust your responses accordingly.

If your interview was dissatisfying, do not despair. Do not assume that you will not be admitted or that you would have an unsatisfactory experience at that college. Remember that your contact with the admissions office will, for all intents and purposes, end once you decide to attend a particular college. Remember also that you should be forming an impression of the college not of the interviewer. In short, unsatisfactory interviews should not be a major determinant in your decision about whether to apply to a given college. Conversely, do not make the decision to attend a particular college simply because you were impressed by the human qualities of the admissions officer.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests, like college interviews and the decisions of the admissions committees, always generate controversy and comment. That, however, does not negate their importance, nor does it give you an excuse not to be prepared for this step in the process.

The diversity within the higher education community in the United States is awesome. Unfortunately, this diversity often leads to confusion with regard to admissions procedures. An inevitable question of an applicant is “What tests do I have to take?” While most of the colleges require either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing Program exam (ACT), there is no uniform answer with regard to Achievement Tests. You should, however, know that Achievement Tests are offered in the following areas: American History and Social Studies, Biology, Chemistry, European History and World Cultures, French, German, Hebrew, Latin, Literature, Mathematics Level I, Mathematics Level II, Physics and Spanish.

You must obtain accurate information about the test requirements of the institutions that interest you. Use the reference books that are available, read the college catalogs, talk to the admissions representatives that visit your school, and discuss your plans with your college counselor. It is far better to be over-prepared than to be eliminated from consideration simply because you did not submit the necessary materials.

Information about these tests can always be obtained from your college counselor or by writing either to the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey 08541, or to the American College Testing Program, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa 52243. Or you can visit their websites www.collegeboard.com or www.ACTStudent.org

Generally, the higher your scores, the greater your chances of admission. This is particularly true with those state-supported institutions that use test scores as one of two basic selection criteria. Many of these colleges have a policy of automatically accepting those students whose test scores and grade point averages combine to place them above a predetermined level.

Selective colleges will use the tests as one of many indices of your ability. Some applicants with high-test scores and reasonably good grades may be denied admission if they appear to be unusually withdrawn, egocentric, or arrogant. Conversely, there are always applicants recognized for their nonacademic or personal strengths who will be admitted to selective schools even though their test scores may fall well below the mean of the freshman class.

Colleges with a subjective admissions process will consider your background when evaluating your performance on the standardized tests. For instance, students coming from bilingual homes or homes where English is rarely spoken will not be penalized if their scores are not as high as those of applicants whose familiarity with the language is considerable. Background variables are also considered when evaluating an applicant’s performance on Achievement Tests. Certain secondary schools do an excellent job of preparing their students for these exams; other schools are not oriented in this direction. Basically, the scores on the Achievement Tests are increasingly valued, as they reflect what one has learned as opposed to one’s “aptitude.”

College Essay Tips & Advice

- **Treat it as an opportunity.** Not a burden. The essay is one of the few things that you’ve got complete control over in the application process, especially by the time you are in your senior year. Use it to tell us a part of your story.
- **Take the time to go beyond the obvious.** Especially if you are recounting an event, take it beyond the chronological storytelling. Include some opinion or reflection.
- **Don’t try to take on too much.** Focus on one event, once activity, or one “most influential person.” Tackling too much tends to make your essay too watered down or disjointed.
- **Brainstorm the things that matter to you.** Don’t be afraid to reveal yourself in your writing. We want to know who you are and how you think.
- **Write thoughtfully and with authenticity.** It’ll be clear who believes in what they are saying versus those who are simply saying what they think we want to hear.
- **Be comfortable showing your vulnerability.** We don’t expect you to be perfect. Feel free to tell us about a time you stumbled, and what happened next.
- **Answer the prompt.** We are most interested in the story you are telling, but it is important to follow directions, too. Be sure you are addressing the essay prompt.
- **Be yourself.** If you are funny, write a funny essay; if you are serious, write a serious essay don’t start reinventing yourself with the essay.
- **Ignore the urge for perfection.** There’s no such thing as the perfect college essay. Just be yourself and write the best way you know how.
- **Tell us something different** from what we will read on your list of extracurricular activities or transcript.
- **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** There’s a difference between “tutoring children” and “torturing children” and your spell-check will not catch that.
- **Keep it concise.**
- **Limit the number of people who review your essay.** Too much input usually means your voice is lost in the writing style.
- **Appearances count.** Formatting and presentation cannot replace substance, but they can certainly enhance the value of an already well-written essay.

WHAT NOT TO DO WITH THE ESSAY

What if the question seems dull, vague, or otherwise uninteresting? Should the writer manufacture enthusiasm? Absolutely not! The student should work the question until he or she finds an angle that will make it worth answering. If the question seems vague, how can it be made more specific? If too distant, how can it be brought into the writer's experience? No one should begin to write an essay without first having decided on a way to "possess" it.

Students should not assume, however, the most important English word is "I." Possessing the essay in this case means creating a satisfying work—a portrait of a courageous teacher or an inspiring moment, a passionate diatribe against an injustice or a description of life in one's neighborhood. Whatever the topic, the writing should speak for the writer. When the "I" becomes intrusive it dissipates the effectiveness of the essay.

Many students fall into the trap of using the essay to justify weakness in their grades or test scores, regardless of the question. Special pleading should be done in a separate letter or by a teacher or counselor. The essay is a special province, a place to shine regardless of the past. The essay's power comes from its independence of, not its dependence on, the student's past record. By approaching it this way, a student can write more freely, leaving explanations of past performance for another forum.

Another trap is trying to be "creative" in inappropriate ways: writing about a leaf from an ant's point of view, in Gaelic, as Elvis... These methods detract from the essay's force by making the medium more important than the message. The writer's own voice is drowned out, leaving a creaky gimmick in the wake.

Related to gimmickry is trendiness, the urge to write about whatever is hot at the moment: a social movement, a novel, or a film, for example. When *Dead Poets Society* was current, we read what seemed like hundreds of essays based on "*carpe diem*," and after the first sentence we knew what the rest of the essay would be like. A very good writer who wants a real challenge might take up the trendy topic in an ironic voice, but for most writers the best path is to avoid what is currently hot.

Finally, the student should leave plenty of time to do the work of writing: relying on last-minute inspiration is risky. The structuring of an essay takes time and many drafts. The best writer's work only looks easy.

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

These suggestions might sound like a recipe for good gray prose, and in a way that is true. Clear, strong, writing, unfortunately, becomes rarer each year, so when admission officers see it, it is highly prized. Students who can show a facility for vigorous prose; appropriate diction, careful analysis, and awareness of literary devices in their essays indicate that they are on track to do well in college. The truth is good writers don't need gimmicks. Students who have heard about the guy who wrote "Why not?" as an essay answer and was admitted should be immediately discouraged from doing the same. We look for students who rise to the challenge of a question by making it uniquely their own and who, through their writing, communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others. No tricks, no mirrors, no laser shows, please; students should show us that they are willing to think since that, we hope, is what they will be doing a great deal of in the years

Personal Statement

Not all colleges ask applicants to write a personal statement in addition to the essays on the Personal Application Form. However, those that require it consider it an important part of the application process. Its purpose is twofold: to give admissions officers another indication of your writing ability and to give you an opportunity to present information about an important facet of your life. Thus, the personal statement lets you elaborate upon a particular extracurricular or a vocational interest, provide information about an unusual or difficult family situation, present reasons why you intend to pursue a particular career, or demonstrate your creativity.

If a college asks you to prepare a personal statement, be thoughtful and thought provoking, not cute or vacuous. Also, write about an issue of significance and familiarity to you; nothing is less effective than a statement full of sweeping generalizations related to issues philosophers or politicians have been struggling over for centuries.

You should be able to cover your topic in two typed pages. Too short a statement may be interpreted as a lack of interest, while one that rambles on for pages is much more likely to bore than to stimulate the members of the admissions committee.

Letters of Recommendation

If you engage in religious, community or social programs, your secondary school counselor may not know enough about these to comment on this aspect of your background. Thus, do not hesitate to ask those who have supervised your work to write letters of recommendation for you. A good letter should provide an admissions committee with a detailed explanation of the work you do.

Letters from alumni can also be useful, primarily because they may be the only people in the admissions process who know both you and the institution well. As you might expect, however, a bland and uninformative letter from an alumnus, no matter how famous, is not going to carry much weight with an admissions committee.

College faculty members, too, are valued sources of information. References from faculty members are useful, for these people are in an excellent position to compare a candidate with the undergraduates studying at the institution. It should be emphasized, however, that no letter from a faculty member or an alumnus would carry the day for an applicant who is comparatively weak. Vast amounts of padding and documentation cannot change a marginal transcript or improve College Board scores that are 150 points below the mean of the freshman class.

What kind of letter is useful to an admissions committee? Since secondary schools provide colleges with information about a candidate's academic performance, there is no need to repeat that information. Thus, those supporting your candidacy should focus on your nonacademic interests, your personal strengths or unusual qualities, your work experiences, or your commitment to certain community or religious endeavors. Of particular value are anecdotal examples of your integrity, humor, ability to adapt, interpersonal skills, interest in others, and openness to new experiences. Simply listing adjectives sheds some light on an applicant's personality, but you must remember that selective schools are trying to make distinctions among a great many applicants, most of whom are pleasant, affable, articulate, interesting, and interested. Thus, a recommender should not hesitate to give examples of how you demonstrated tolerance in the face of dogmatism, or courage in the face of adversity, or dignity in the face of a loss. In other words, encourage people to support your candidacy if they will take the time to explain the special reasons why you are deserving of recognition.

Supplementary Material

A number of liberal arts colleges are now encouraging applicants to submit supplementary materials in addition to all the standard forms. Musicians send in CD's; artists, slides; creative writers, poems or short stories and young scholars, samples of their research. Submit materials for faculty review, however, only if you are very, very good. Remember faculty members are trained to be critical. Their tolerance for the inept or the phony is nonexistent, and they are more than willing to communicate negative evaluations to the admissions office.

What guidelines might you use in deciding whether to submit additional material? First, do not ever assume that quantity is a substitute for quality. One eight-line poem that is carefully constructed and sensitively written is far superior to a fifty-page, rambling, poorly researched paper. Second, seek the advice of experts whose competence and honesty you respect in order to determine how good you are. Simply being a member of an orchestra or band does not mean that you are an outstanding musician. Third, do not submit samples of your elementary school creative efforts. The same advice applies to culinary achievements; while appreciated by hungry admissions officers, these "works of art" have no bearing on your candidacy. Finally, if you submit material and want it returned, make certain that it is appropriately labeled.

To Sum Up ...

Applying to college, unfortunately, is a process vulnerable to rumor and bad advice. While these will never be eliminated entirely, it is possible for applicants to reduce their impact by becoming as knowledgeable as possible about the process. While the advice in this document will not make weak applicants strong, it should help those who were unfamiliar with the process avoid repeating the mistakes others have made. I offer these suggestions in an effort to bring more equity to a subjective process and to help applicants present themselves in as compelling a manner as possible.

Applicants should take the time and make the effort to prepare materials that will give admissions committees a comprehensive summation of their backgrounds, strengths, achievements, and goals. This is far from an easy task, and at times, it is downright frustrating. However, keep reminding yourself that you are making an investment in yourself. Managing your college applications capably is the least you can do for your future.

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Take Charge of The College Essay

Willard M. Dix

*Assistant Dean of Admissions at Amherst College,
where acceptance criteria include an essay. He
reports that writing the article was "a tough battle."*

Only one part of the college application is not history--the essay. Everything else, from grades to SATs to membership in the Save the Ducks Society, reflects past performance. Writing the essay therefore can be the most terrifying part of the application process. It requires a conscious act of presentation. It is the self-in-waiting on the blank page that terrifies, as even great writers will testify. The prospect of being judged by unknown individuals further reduces the student's sense of self, but the stakes for doing well on the essay are high. Not a pleasant combination, especially if the student hopes the essay will counter an otherwise mediocre transcript or soft scores.

On the positive side, the essay represents an opportunity, because the student can exercise total control over this part of the application. While everything else is engraved in stone, the essay is Silly Putty. Within the outline of the question, great latitude exists for creativity and expression. How can one tap into this potential for control? It is easy to say that the student is in charge, but what can alleviate the anxiety enough to allow the creative juices to flow?

Why do colleges ask for essays in the first place? It may partly be for a writing sample, but at least at my college, the questions are designed primarily to see how students can wrap their brains around broadly based questions. We are not interested in "right" answers, since we don't feel there are any. Instead, we want students to show us their willingness to delve into topics, demonstrating their intellectual curiosity and showing off their writing prowess. The capacity to confront challenging questions is an important part of academic life; the essay gives us a small sample of a student's ability to do so.

TAKING CONTROL OF THE ESSAY

Reading the questions carefully is the first step toward taking control of the essay. Although admission officers do not have particular answers in mind, they are quite picky about whether the student addressed the question. Before starting to write, students should be sure they understand what is being asked. Is it very general or very specific? What does it ask you to do: report, summarize, analyze, narrate? When in doubt, it does not hurt to talk with a teacher or with friends. In general, an earnest but failed attempt to answer the question interests readers more than a smoothly written answer that doesn't address the issue.

Understanding the audience comes next. Generally, we are taught to write for a particular group. The college essay has no audience per se except the vague, mysterious body known as the admission committee. This may be the first time the student has written for an unknown audience. Consequently, the appropriate tone, diction, and style are uncertain, and students generally resort to writing what they think the committee wants to hear. The result is generally stilted diction (in an attempt to sound "educated"), posturing, and laboriousness rather than writing that reflects energy and spontaneity.

Students can take charge by forgetting about the admission committee entirely and writing for themselves. The best essays read as though the writers wrote from the heart about an important subject rather than looking at a "performance." We are able to look at the writers "at home," with no makeup or costumes. Using model essays or formulas does not work. Writing for oneself almost guarantees a depth of feeling any reader would enjoy.