



Class of 2027: College Career Night for Junior Families Night 2

Ms. Sara Hanson & Mr. Dan Miller
Post Secondary Counselors

March 19, 2026



Our Philosophy

- This is a journey. Students learn a lot about themselves in this process.
- We focus on what strengths/talents the students have and want to share.
- We look at this process as matching students to a pathway, where you go is not who you'll be. We do not focus on rankings or a particular type of college.
- We aim to teach you to how find the resources.

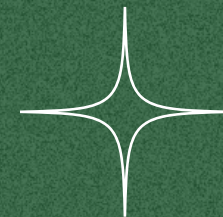
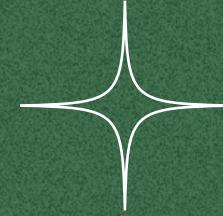


Post Secondary Counselors

Mr. Dan Miller
West Side

Ms. Sara Hanson
East Side

Mr. Ademi
Mrs. Dwyer
Mrs. Falk
Mrs. Grove
Mrs. Kogan
Mrs. Levenbrook
Mrs. Scanio
Mrs. Scardina
Mr. Varghese
Mr. Vazquez



Mrs. Aulisio
Mrs. Breuer
Mr. Diambri
Mrs. Kelly
Mrs. Martin
Ms. Meiners
Mrs. Puppolo
Mr. Tad-y
Mrs. Timm



What we covered in November

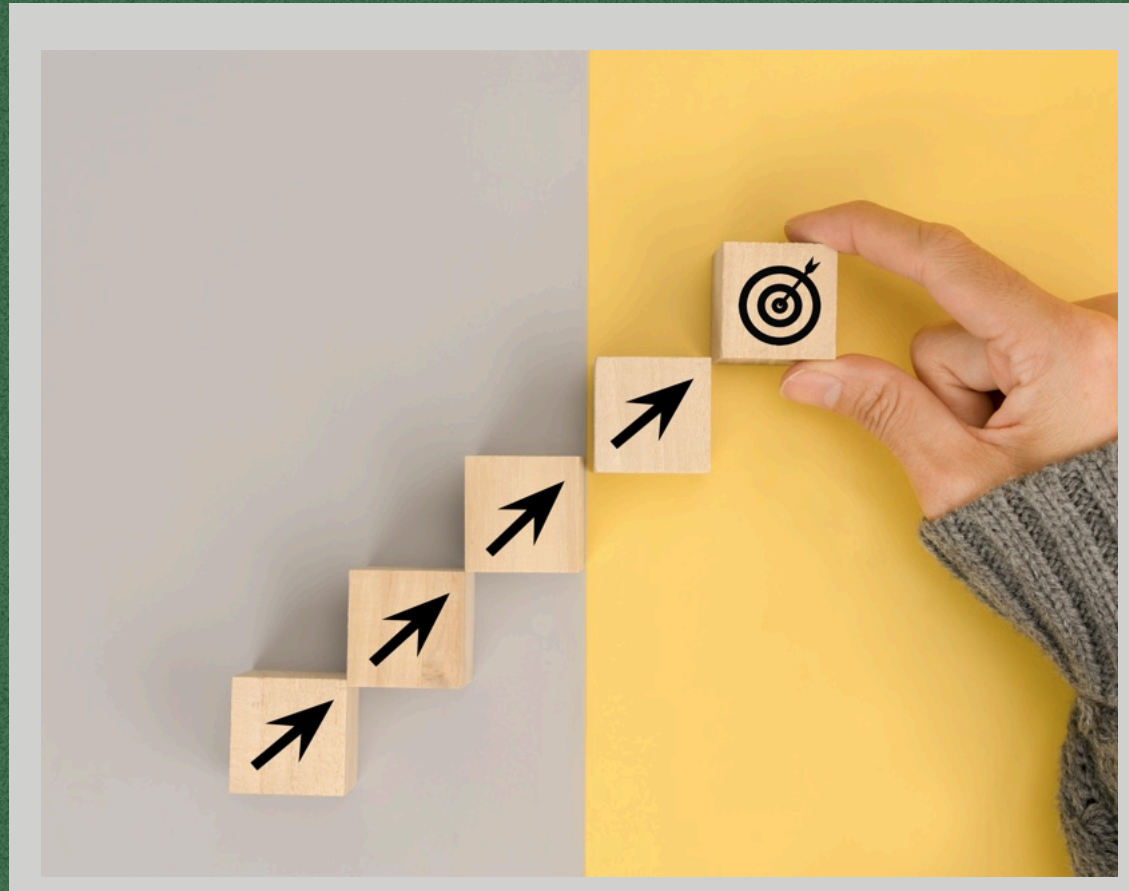
Did you miss part 1?
Find the recording and slides
on our website!



- Interactive family worksheet
- Discovering your interests
- Options after High School
- How to Choose A College
- How to Build a List
- Homework

Goals for Tonight

AGENDA



- How Colleges Admit Students
- Admission Plans & Application Process
- Building the List
- \$\$\$ - Scholarships and Financial Aid
- Timeline, Resources, and Family Homework

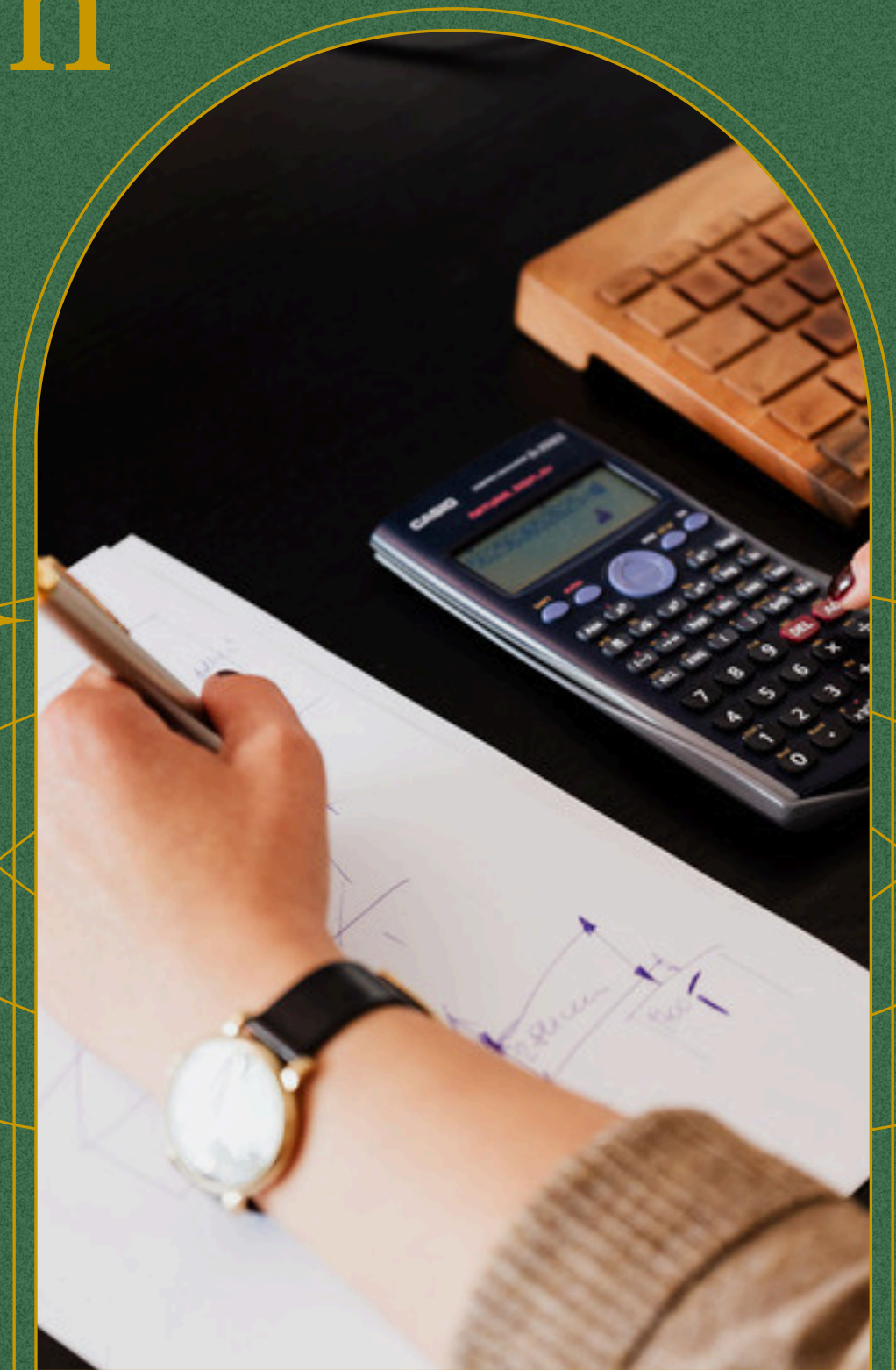
Formulaic Admission

- Transparent admission procedures
- Clear criteria for admission
- Usually off GPA, core courses taken & perhaps a test score



Non-Ranking High Schools – Test Scores

ACT	SAT	Core GPA
24+	1160+	2.0+
23	1130–1150	2.80
22	1100–1120	2.90
21	1060–1090	3.05
20	1030–1050	3.20
19	990–1020	3.35
18	960–980	3.50
17	920–950	3.65



Formulaic Admission



Northern Illinois University: If you have a cumulative high school GPA of 3.0 or higher, you're guaranteed general admission.

University of Iowa:

How to Calculate Your RAI

3 x ACT composite score or SAT Equivalent. +

30 x Cumulative GPA (weighted or unweighted) +

5 x Number of years of h.s. courses completed in the core subject areas =

Your RAI Score > 255, you are in (to most majors)!



Holistic Admission



Several factors are used together to determine a fit

- Transcript (the most important part)
- Testing (may or may not be a part)
- Essay
- Co-curricular activities
- Major
- Letters of recommendation (for some schools)
- Interest level (points of contact)
- Additional items (portfolio, auditions, interviews)

Transcripts

Student A

Student B

Cumulative GPA

3.37 wtd

3.25 wtd

Yearly GPA

3.54 wtd (9th)

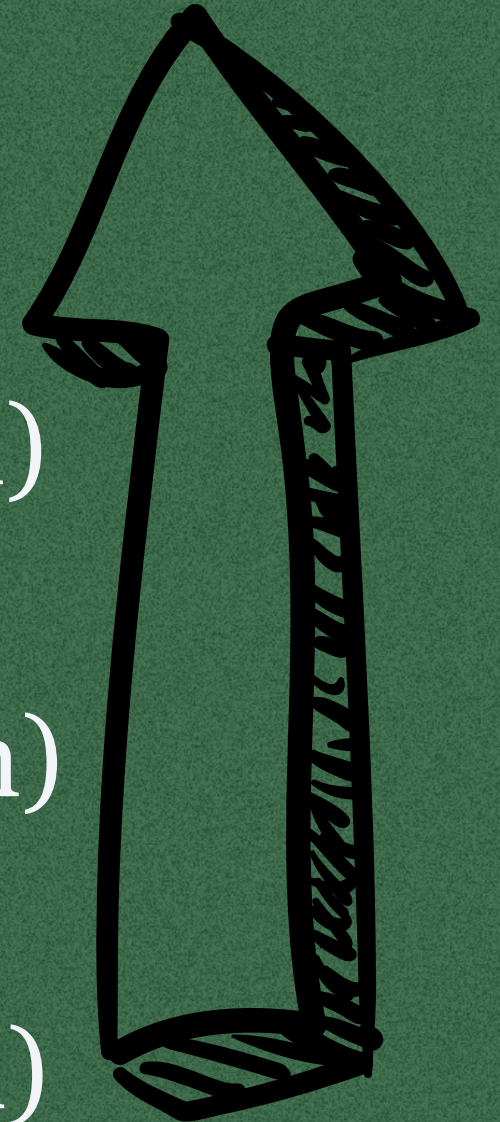
3.00 wtd (9th)

3.50 wtd (10th)

3.12 wtd (10th)

3.08 wtd (11th)

3.57 wtd (11th)



Academic Record

- Many colleges admit on 6 semesters
- Looking for a college prep curriculum:

English: 4 years

Math: 3-4 years

Science: 3-4 years

Social Studies: 3-4 years

World Language: (same) 2+ years/levels (IEP/ML)*

Fine Arts: 1 year**

*Exceptions might be made

**CA Publics, 1 semester for UW Seattle

- Grades in core classes are most important
- Grade trends, rigor, & grades in classes related to major
- Senior classes

How Colleges Admit



- All colleges (who aren't test blind/free) accept SAT or ACT equally
- Colleges will look at the best Composite Score and/or Superscore
- Test-prep/testing is “not a co-curricular activity”
- A few schools require all testing history
- Writing component - no need to take (with the exception of state test)
- Best advice: take one of them 2-3 times
- ACT Science (optional), advised to check with individual schools & majors



English Proficiency Exams

- If you haven't been in an English-speaking country/school for 3 years, schools might require an exam
- Check the requirements of each college
- Exams you might see accepted: IELTS, TOEFL, and Duolingo

Your Family Homework



ACT

Date	Registration Deadline
June 13	May 8
July 11	June 5
★ Sept 19	Aug 14
★ Oct 17	Sept 11



SAT

Date	Registration Deadline
May 2	Apr 17
★ Jun 6	May 22
★ Aug 22	
★ Sept 12	
Oct 3	

Seats can fill quickly, and ahead of deadline

All Jrs will take ACT on Apr 8 (includes Science & Writing)

★ SHS is a Host Site



Types of Essays

- “Why Us” – shows genuine interest in a school, needs to be very specific
- “Why this major” – be clear on how you have explored it, and reasons for studying
- “Additional information” – academic journey, personal circumstances (e.g. significant hiccup on transcript, IEP/504, illness that impacted you)
- Analytical questions
 - What advice would a Wisdom Tooth have?
 - Who is a significant person in your life?
 - “Which Ben & Jerry’s ice cream flavor (real or imagined!) best describes you?”

Tip: 1/3 about the experience/answer, 2/3 about you

Essays

- Optional isn't really optional (with a few exceptions).
- Answer the prompt and have it proofread.
- “Student’s voice” shining through.
- Quality is better than quantity.
- Give time for the process.
- AI: ChatGPT/related tools are meant to be utilized as a resource in developing ideas
 - Check college sites for “policy.”



Consider the Summer College Essay Workshop
4 days only, offered 5 times during the summer, twice in the
evening, once via Zoom! Deadline is March 20th.

Letters of Recommendation



Counselor

- Big picture perspective.
- Hiccups, challenges, personal circumstances.
- You in the context of our high school.
- Many schools will not request one.
- Google Survey Form

Teacher

- Usually, a “core” teacher and often junior year.
- Can speak deeply.
- May ask before summer, know requirements.
Avoid “over” asking, adhere to minimum.
- Many schools do not want/take them (UIUC).
- Use Reflection Sheet

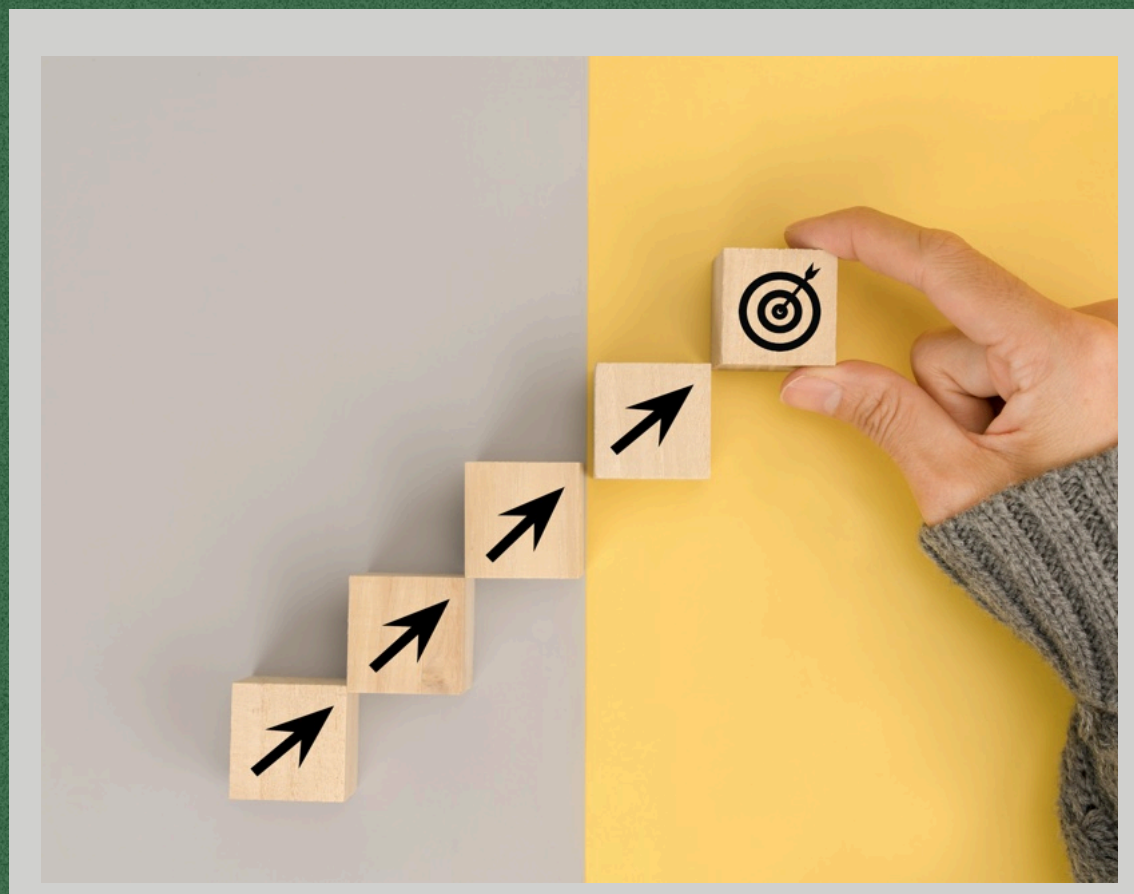
Check requirements and adhere to minimum

Other factors



- Points of contact prior to application (Interest)
- Major (some majors can be space-limited)
- Co-curricular Activities (clubs, sports, part-time job, significant home responsibilities)
 - No specific checklist from college
- Unique attributes (holistically speaking - major, location, athletics, etc.)
- Institutional Goals (unknown and changes yearly)
- Admission plan

Goals for Tonight



- How Colleges Admit Students
- Admission Plans & Application Process
- Building the List
- \$\$\$ - Scholarships and Financial Aid
- Timeline, Resources, and Family Homework

Not every plan is offered at every college

- **Early Decision** - binding plan largely at private schools. Families can't compare packages, or hear back from other schools.
- **Restrictive Early Action (or Single Choice)** - Not binding, but restricts application plans at other schools
- **Early Action (sometimes called Priority)**- almost all public schools offer EA, where scholarship money is prioritized
- **Regular** - later in the cycle
- **Rolling** - no fall deadlines, notifications roll out

Application Process

Look for the checklist on the colleges' websites:



- 1) Essays
- 2) Major (s)
- 3) Courses & Grades
- 4) Test Scores (if provided)



[Expand all](#) | [Collapse all](#)

- + 1. Admissions Application
- + 2. Application Fee
- + 3. Two Essays
- + 4. Course and Grade Information
- + 5. One Required Letter of Recommendation
- + 6. TOEFL, IELTS, AND DET Scores (English Language Proficiency)

Optional First-Year Application Materials

[Expand all](#) | [Collapse all](#)

- + ACT AND SAT SCORES (test optional through the spring 2027 term)



Completing Your Northwestern Application

A quick checklist of application components can be found on our main [Apply page](#). Below, you'll find links to application components, such as your letters of recommendation or personal statement, and answers to common questions.

- > [Standardized Test Scores](#)
- > [Letters of Recommendation](#)
- > [Personal Statement and Supplemental Essay\(s\)](#)
- > [Activity Chart](#)
- > [Interviews](#)
- > [Selecting Early or Regular Decision](#)
- > [Applications That May Require Additional Materials](#)
- > [Special Circumstances](#)
- > [Confidentiality and Mandated Reporting](#)
- > [Once You've Hit "Submit"](#)

Timeline for Applying

First Deadline (Heavily Recommended @ SHS)

October 15th:

- Early Decision, Restrictive Early Action (or Single Choice), and Early Action.
- All public university apps.
- Extremely crucial at most Big 10 campuses (i.e., U of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Indiana U, U Wisconsin Madison, and U of Michigan).
- Best consideration for admission and scholarship money.
- All your parts should be submitted at this point (letters can be uploaded until actual deadline).

Timeline for Applying Second Deadline (heavily recommended @ SHS) Nov. 30th:

- Any other 4-year application that use a Regular Deadline and is private.
- Often actual deadline is in early January
 - December time to finish strong in courses
 - Enjoy winter break

Take a Break!



Common App (used by almost every student)

- Used by over 1000+ schools - globally
- One “Common” application with supplemental info for each college that is added into the dashboard
- Works with One-Click
- 7 Essay prompts - students write to one
- More of an application management tool

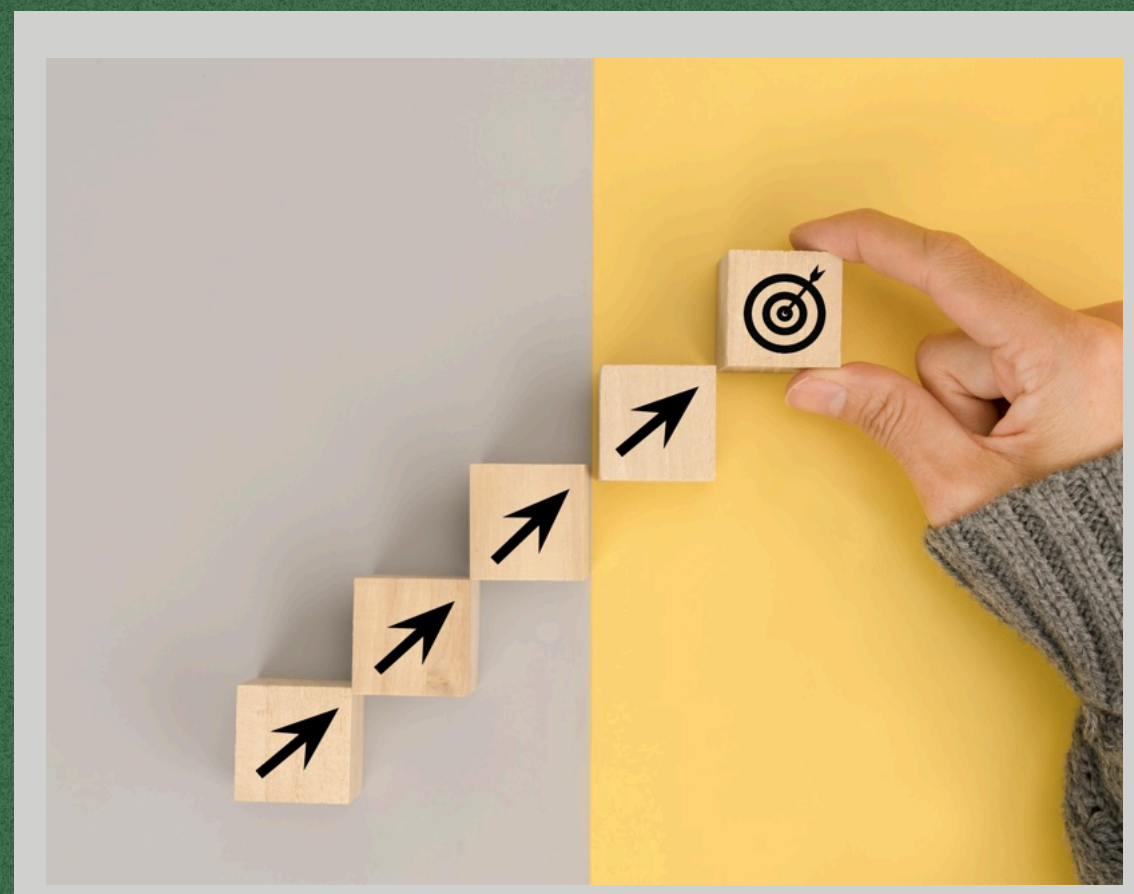


QuestBridge

- Special application for students who are:
 - Very strong academically
 - AND have high financial need (Free/Reduced Lunch)

Coalition App - We recommend avoiding

Goals for Tonight



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Find the Fit

Focus on the right school, not best school.
Fit varies from student to student.

- Academic
- Social, Personal, Emotional
- Financial



Categories

Safety/Likely Schools

- Slam Dunk for admission
- Financially Reasonable

Target/Match Schools

- Meet all requirements for admission
- Students in the same academic standings have usually been admitted
- Financially Attainable

Unpredictable/Reach Schools

- Might have deficiencies in requirements and/or fall below where students are usually admitted
- Financial reach
- Highly selective (any college/program that has less than a 25% admit rate)

Ideally, your list is between
5-10 schools total

How to Gauge Admission Likelihood

The screenshot displays the Illinois State University website, featuring a navigation bar with links: Overview, Cost, Visits, Admissions, Majors, Student life, Alumni, Related colleges, and Contact. The main content area is divided into two sections: "Illinois State University at a glance" and "Is this college right for you?".

Illinois State University at a glance

Metric	Value
Acceptance rate	88%
Average net price	\$14,083 (for \$0 - \$30K family income)
Student retention	81.44% (Students who return their sophomore year)
Next deadline	April 1 (Regular Decision)

Is this college right for you?

This college fits your academic profile because GPA and test scores place this school as a match, indicating likely academic readiness; however, the college does not offer majors that relate to your favorite careers and the planned education path is not selected, so those misalignments should be considered.

- ☐ **Path**
No path selected
- ☐ **Career match**
Does not offer majors that relate to your favorite careers.
- ☒ **GPA**
Based on your GPA, this college is a Match.
- ☒ **Test scores**
Based on your test score, this college is a Match.

Matches your profile

[How this matches your profile](#)

Overview

Smart summary

Illinois State University is a public, standard four-year college with an undergraduate enrollment of 16,107 students. It maintains a student-to-faculty ratio of 20:1, with an average class size of 25.5 students. Situated in an urban environment, the university offers various degree programs, some of which are available through online learning options. The academic offerings include Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate, and Graduate Certificate degrees. Illinois State University has a job placement rate of 75% within six months and 92% within one year of graduation. The college boasts an undergraduate acceptance rate of 88%.

About this college

Illinois State is a public university of nearly 21,000 students located in the Top 10 college town of Bloomington Normal, Illinois. With over 150 majors in six academic colleges and more than 400 student organizations on campus, you are sure to find your place on our famously friendly campus. We hope...

[Show more](#)

Counselor comments

COLLEGE REP VISIT NOTES - STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL
LAST DATE OF REP VISIT: 6/22/2025

COLLEGE REP: Kate McCarthy / kmccar1@illinoisState.edu

ADMISSION INFORMATION

Undergrad Enrollment: 21,000

Requirements for Admission: High school curriculum consisting of 4 years of English, 3 years of math, 2 years of lab sciences, 2 years of social studies, 2 years of the same foreign language or 2 years of fine arts. Looking for strong academics and 3.1 gpa with ACT 21 as general guideline, if borderline or below middle 50% ranges, provide personal statement and explain why you feel you would be successful at ISU and/or explanation of any circumstances that have impacted academic performance, if applicable, some majors are more competitive (Education - elementary, Special, Early, middle - Secondary level are through individual department, Nursing - most competitive - looking for 3.9 is desirable, Interior design, Speech Pathology).

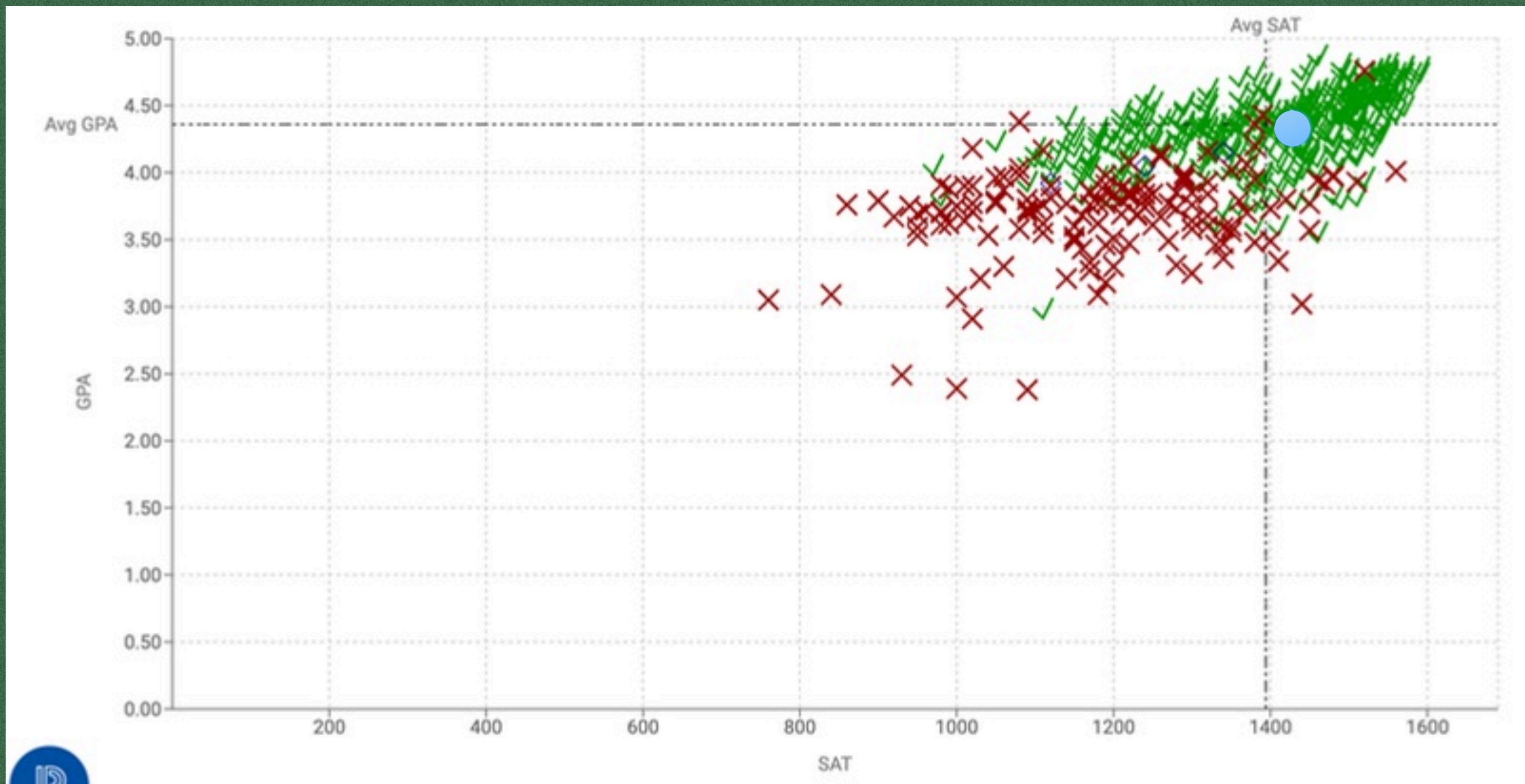
Application Process: ISU's Online application, newer to Common App, self-reported academic record, self-reported SAT or ACT score & subscores, optional personal statement, if unsure of intended major, can apply as undeclared, priority deadline of 11/1, important! Fine arts programs may require portfolio or audition, do not send letters of rec, overlap with DePaul, Bradley.

Building the List



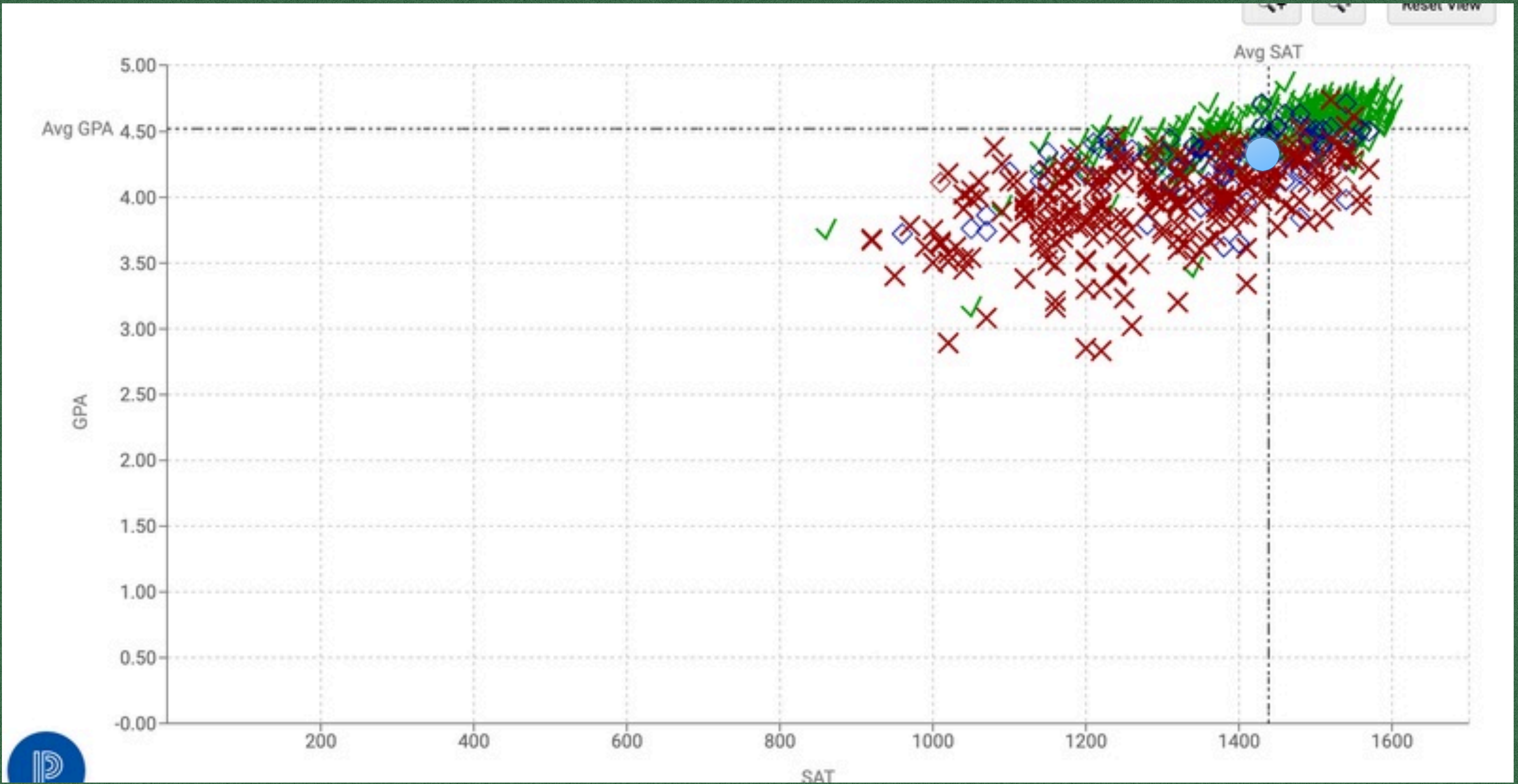
Illinois State University

Target/Match School



Ohio State University

Unpredictable/Reach School



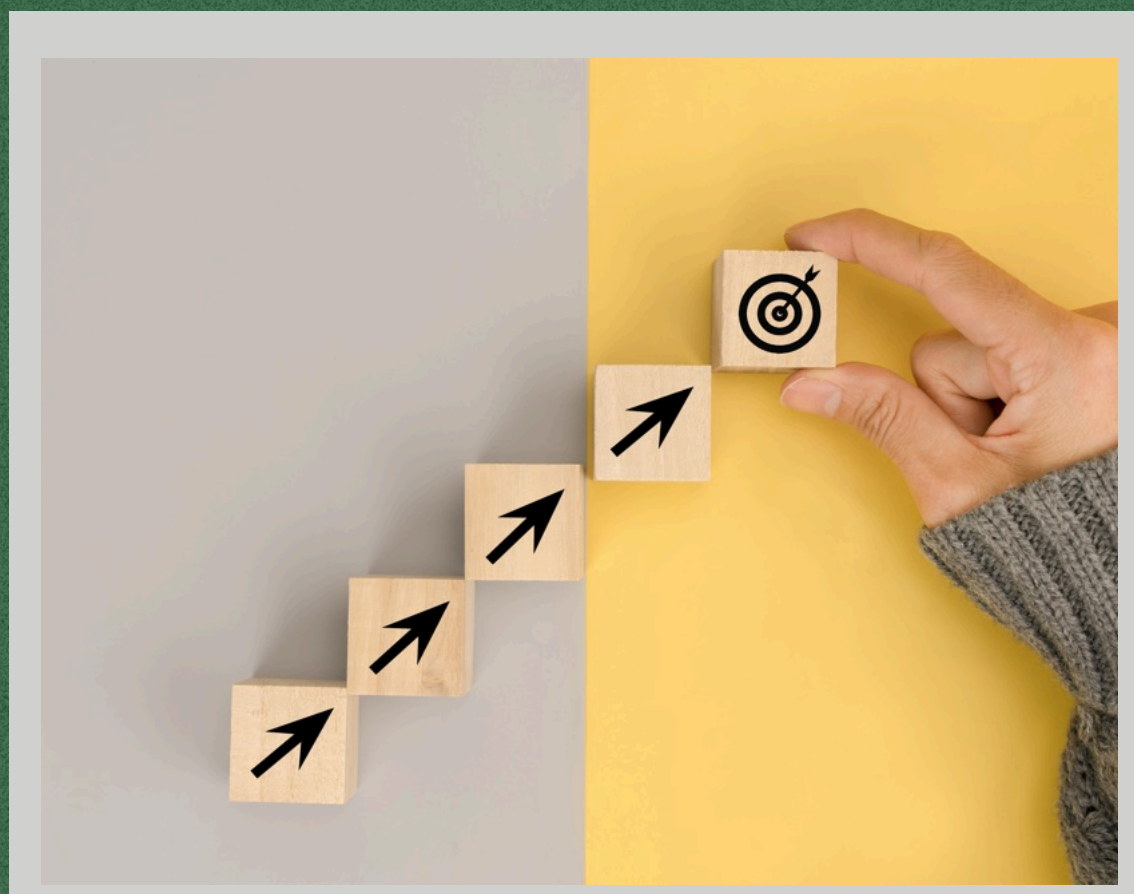
University of Wisconsin - Madison

Things to watch out for

- Selectivity/ranking means better outcome data.
- Focusing TOO much on unpredictable schools.
- Not loving your safety/target schools.
- Using outside resources to gauge admission.
- Applying to too many schools to see what might happen.

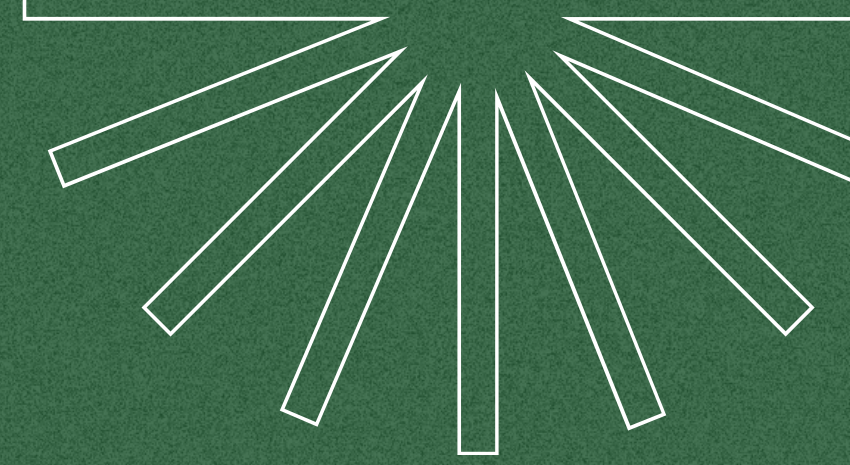


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Start having “the conversation” now



- Set expectations and use the categories.
- Need/Ability vs. Want/Willingness.
- Understand what is your eligibility.
- Use net price calculators.
 - www.collegecost.ed.gov/net-price
- Private schools CAN COST LESS from their own funds.

Armed Services Opportunities

- Direct Enlistment
- Army Reserves can help pay for college tuition - weekend training
- Army National Guard/IL National Guard/Air Force National Guard
 - 8-semester tuition grant
 - College is concurrent
- ROTC - Enter as an officer after completion of college
 - Scholarship opportunities
 - First two years
 - After two years, decide if you want to continue
- Military Academies - Enter as an officer after completion
 - Full-time college with military training
 - Very selective & intense



****Must be a US Citizen or Permanent Resident (Green Card Holder)**

Scholarships

- Register with a free database like Fastweb.com or appily.com.
- Check Naviance.
- Subscribe to the SHS Daily Digest.
- Check into your community. Employers, credit unions, religious organizations, and community-based organizations offer scholarships.
- Complete the Stevenson Foundation Scholarships application in January of your senior year.
- Research the schools to which you are applying.

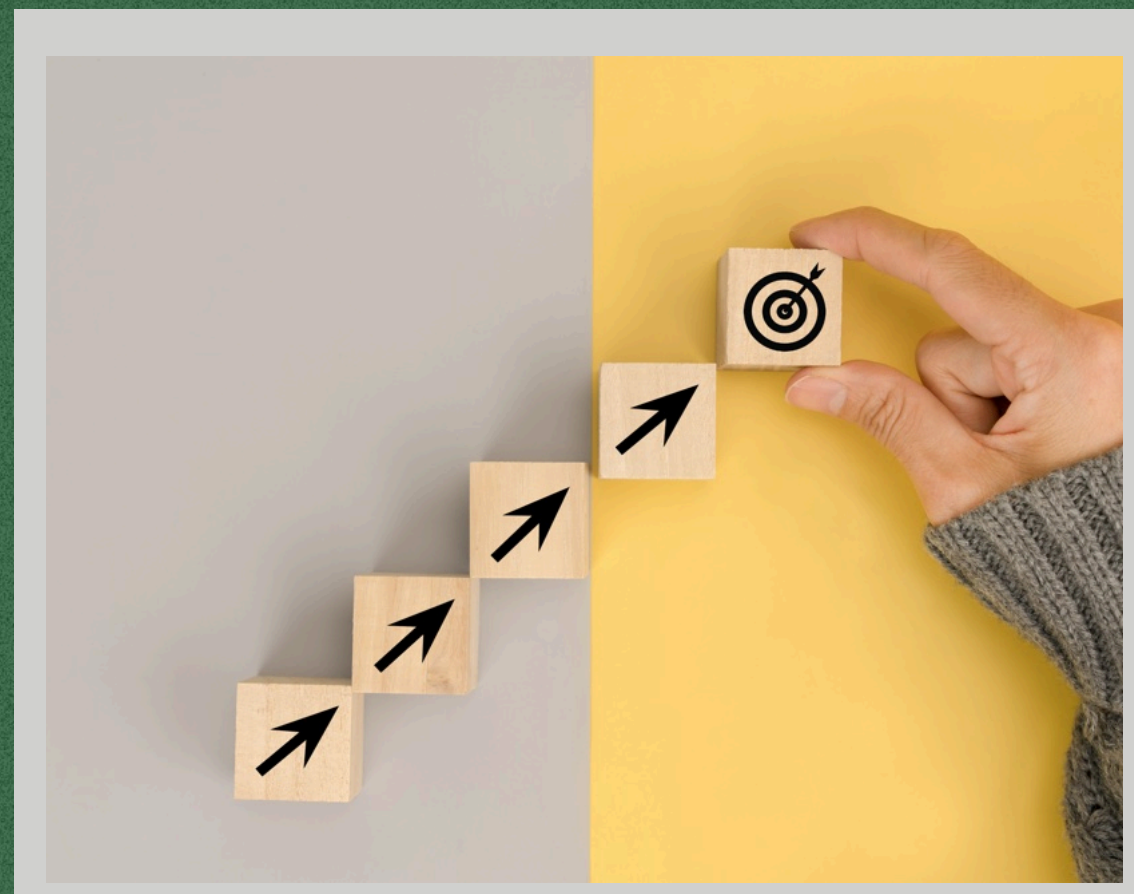


Need-Based Aid

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
 - Opens October 1, 2026 (Senior Year), Using Taxes from 2025
 - Complete 27-28 FAFSA (school year you will be in)
 - Annual form
 - Student must be a US Citizen/Perm res. or eligible non-citizen
- CSS Profile - Don't complete unless required
 - ~400 schools, typically highly selective with higher cost of attendance
 - Very detailed, analysis of family expenses
 - Non-custodial form may be required

Financial Aid Night
FAFSA Completion Night
Next School Year

Goals for Tonight



- How Colleges Admit Students
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How To Do Research

- Essential questions important to you.
- Search tools (Naviance, College Board/Big Future).
- Use the CCC and the individual colleges' websites.
- College fairs (spring/fall) and college rep visits (fall of senior year).
- Visit colleges & attend information sessions (virtual is an option too).
- Speak to friends and family about their experiences.



Next Steps

By August

- List of colleges by categories, 5-10 schools total (at max 15)
- Work on Essays
- Look at the application requirements
- Create/update an outside email address
- Start to create an organizational system
- Consider recommenders
- Set up times to communicate as a family
- Provide students opportunities to practice “adulting”

Join us on Monday, August 24th for Night 3!

We will go into more detail on the application process.

Upcoming CCC Family Events

August 24: Senior Family Night

September 28: Financial Aid Night

September 30: First Generation to US Undergraduate Admission College Night 1

October 14: FAFSA/Alternative Illinois Aid Form Workshop

November 19: First Generation to US Undergraduate Admission College Night 2

December 9: Preparing for Admission Decisions and the Next Steps (Zoom only)

Upcoming CCC Student only Events

Apr. – Junior Seminars – students will come into CCC out of math classes.

Mid-August: Senior English Groups - CCC

Rep visits: Late August - Nov.

****Workshops for Seniors in the Fall**

- Drop-In Tuesdays
- Essays Workshops
- Common App Workshops
- UIUC Insider Session
- U California App Workshops
- Interview Panel

One Click College Admit



- State's free and quick, direct admissions program into state public universities and community colleges. Each university/college will set its own GPA requirement.
- Students can apply traditionally if they do not meet the GPA requirement. UIUC and UIC will have more info to share (they will not have a cut GPA).
- Students must opt in for the program by May 22, 2026, and can do so at any time. www.oneclickadmit.org
- The student will create a Common App over the summer.
- SHS is emailing out info as more details are forthcoming.





Please take a moment to complete our Survey:

<https://forms.gle/xifp8ovoN5E1UfFSA>

