GUIDE TO

College Counseling



Oakland Catholic
High School

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College Counseling Center



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1 College Counseling Philosophy

Philosophy

Each student's college search and application process is a unique and personal experience. The goal of the College Counseling Center is to help each student find the colleges that suit her academically, socially, spiritually, and financially. We believe each student has multiple "best-fit" colleges.

The college search and application process is also an educational experience. Identifying her best-fit colleges requires each student to engage in self-reflection, college research, and decision-making. Each young woman will learn to reflect, discern, and evaluate herself as she partakes in her college admission journey. Throughout the course of their junior and senior years at OC, the Oakland Catholic College Counselor will help students further their skills of critical thinking, writing, research, and organization.

College Counseling Lessons & Individual Meetings

Although the College Counseling Center invites students and parents of all grade levels to attend programming and events, Oakland Catholic's College Counseling Program officially begins in junior year with a kick-off lesson led by the college counselor. Throughout the junior and senior years the college counselor lead subsequent college counseling lessons to explore various components of the college admission process.

Each student is assigned a college counselor at the end of her sophomore year, and students are invited and encouraged to attend one-on-one college advising meetings on a regular basis until graduation.

Events & Offerings

The College Counseling Center hosts many after-school events to help students and parents develop a deeper understanding of the college admission process. In-person and virtual information sessions are offered on topics such as highly selective admissions and standardized testing.

During the spring and summer, the College Counseling Center also offers college application and essay workshops to help students complete the most time-consuming components of their college applications before they begin their senior year at Oakland Catholic.

NACAC National Association for College Admission Counseling

PACAC Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling

Oakland Catholic High School is a member of the Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling and subscribes to the Statement of Principles of Good Practice and is a member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

2 College Research

Scoir

Oakland Catholic is proud to offer the Scoir platform to its students. Scoir is a "one stop shop" college search tool that allows students to learn about colleges via virtual campus tours, fast facts, academic program highlights, and admission and financial aid statistics.

There is also a personalized college match tool in Scoir to help students discover new colleges that meet their wants and needs. Students will also build their college lists in Scoir. We encourage students to use Scoir in conjunction with other reputable resources such as college admission websites and campus visits.

Campus Visits

The best way to know if a college is a good fit for you is to visit campus. By experiencing campus for yourself you'll know if you can picture yourself being happy and successful in that community. There are many components of a campus visit including: general campus tour, residence hall tour, general information session, departmental information session, meeting with an admission counselor and/or a faculty member, etc. Some colleges also offer overnight visits where a current student will host you overnight in their dorm room.

College Visits at OC

Each fall the College Counseling Center brings over 100 college representatives to Oakland Catholic. These visits are offered exclusively to juniors and seniors so they can learn about colleges from an insider without leaving Pittsburgh.

Other

It is encouraged that students join the prospective student mailing list by completing an inquiry form on the college's admission website. This way, students are aware of upcoming deadlines, events, and opportunities to connect with the college. Be vigilant for when colleges are visiting Pittsburgh. Often, there are opportunities to attend an information session, interview, or connect with an admission representative in Pittsburgh.



Ava Cook
is a first-generation college student at Wake Forest University

3 Building a College List

Each student should plan to apply to 6-12 colleges, and we recommend this list is solidified at the beginning of senior year. College lists should also be balanced. Balanced lists include 2-4 likely colleges, 2-4 target colleges, and 2-4 reach/lottery colleges:

Likely College	Target College	Reach College	Lottery College
Your academic credentials fall above (or at the top of) the range for admitted students.	*Your academic credentials fall well within the range for admitted students.*	*Your academic credentials fall below (or at the bottom of) the school's average range for admitted students.*	*A college that admits less than 20% of their applicants, regardless of your academic credentials.*

Once a student establishes a balanced college list, with the help of her college counselor she is now ready to organize her application requirements and deadlines. We recommend students use a college application organizer spreadsheet to keep track of requirements and deadlines.

4 Components of College Applications

Always Required

Application Form *(Responsibility: Student)*

Many colleges offer students a choice in how to apply. Generally, there are four application types: Common Application, Coalition Application (Apply with Scoir), Common Black Application (for students applying to Historically Black Colleges & Universities, or HBCUs) and the application offered on the college website. No favor is given to one application over the other.

Oakland Catholic students are encouraged to apply using Common Application if 3 or more of their colleges offer it. Common Application requires a significant investment of time to complete, but once the core application is complete the student can choose to send the application to multiple schools. The only additional work is the potential completion of a college supplement and/or additional college-specific essays.

NOTE: The College Counseling Center offers a College Application Boot Camp to seniors during the summer leading into their senior year. During this boot camp, the students will receive step-by-step instructions on how to complete the Common Application with accuracy and strategy. All seniors should attend College Application Boot Camp.

Academic Record
Official High School Transcript *(Responsibility: College Counselor)*
Most colleges require an official high school transcript to complete the application. Oakland Catholic has an electronic transcript request form that each senior must complete when she is ready for her college counselor to send her transcript to her college(s). *NOTE: You must submit your application to the college before requesting your transcript.*

Self-Reported/Unofficial High School Transcript *(Responsibility: Student)*
Many large universities require students to self-report their high school grades in lieu of sending an official transcript. The way these colleges accept self-reported grades varies by college. Sometimes they accept a copy of an unofficial transcript, some colleges use the Courses & Grades section on Common Application, and some have their own method. The most common requirement is the Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR/SSAR). The SRAR/SSAR require that the applicant translates her transcript onto the application exactly as they appear on the transcript. If a student is admitted and chooses to enroll at a school that required a self-reported high school transcript, a final official transcript will be required at the conclusion of senior year. Accuracies will be assessed at that time.

Usually Required
Application Fee *(Responsibility: Student)*
Many (but not all) colleges require the student to pay a fee to submit their application, ranging from $25-$100 per college. Each student should work with her family to budget accordingly and strategize her college list with the cost of application fees in mind.

Colleges offer application fee waivers for students who demonstrate financial need. Some colleges also offer fee waivers to students who visit campus, participate in an interview, and/or apply early.

Letters of Recommendation *(Responsibility: Student/College Counselor)*
Letters of recommendation (LOR) are often, but not always, a required component of the college application. Admission requirements vary, ranging from schools who do not accept LOR at all, to schools who limit recommendations to one LOR, to schools who welcome multiple LOR.

There are a few types of LOR: a counselor evaluation, a teacher LOR, and a supplemental (outside) LOR. The most common admission requirement is a counselor evaluation and 1-2 teacher LOR. The admission website of each college will clearly state the application requirements.

ELON UNIVERSITY

“The students at Oakland Catholic do a wonderful job of advocating for themselves through the admission process—whether it be for general admission, scholarships, or other opportunities. This skill will serve them well throughout their collegiate experience and into their professional careers. Self-advocacy takes a certain level of maturity that is rare among high school students, but recurrent in the students I work with from Oakland Catholic.”

–Ginny Dudiak, Elon University

Requesting a Counselor Evaluation

Either the student's college or school counselor will write her counselor evaluation, and the assigned counselor will notify the student in the spring of her junior year. Once notified, the student should complete the counselor recommendation form (CRF) and submit it to the appropriate counselor before the end of junior year. Consider also attaching a resume.

Requesting Teacher LOR

We suggest that every student ask two teachers for LOR, and it is strongly recommended that you choose core subject teachers from junior year. Teacher LOR are most effective when the teacher knows the student well and is able to share specific observations and examples in the letter and comment on the student's academic abilities, character, and behavior. An additional consideration is the academic subject (i.e. if a student is applying to a selective STEM major, it is recommended that she chooses one teacher who has taught her in a STEM-related subject).

Requesting Teacher LOR is a 3-step Process:

1. Ask your teacher in-person if he/she would be willing to write your letter

2. Complete a teacher recommendation form and submit it your teacher. Consider also attaching a resume.

3. Add the request to Scoir.

Students should complete this 3-step process before the end of junior year. Teachers will complete your letter by mid-October. It is the student's responsibility to notify teachers if you have plans to submit a college application before mid-October.

Requesting a Supplemental (Outside) LOR

A student can request a maximum of one supplemental recommendation if she feels that this recommender will add an additional perspective to her application. Examples: athletic coach, a job/internship supervisor, spiritual reference such as a priest, pastor, or mentor. Your recommender should email your letter to your college counselor by September 15 of senior year so she can upload it to Scoir with your OC LOR.

Secondary School Report & School Profile *(Responsibility: College Counselor)*

The secondary school report and school profile serve to provide background information about Oakland Catholic. These documents give context to your grades and course selections and help application review committees better understand Oakland Catholic. Students do not need to do anything to request that these documents are sent to their colleges; your college counselor automatically sends these documents to your colleges when she sends your transcript.

Personal Statement *(Responsibility: Student)*

Many applications require or recommend a personal statement (college essay) as a component of the application. The personal statement is often the most time-consuming part of the application, but it is also the most personalized component. (Typically, the personal statement word limit is 650 words.) The personal statement gives the applicant a chance to have a voice. Even if the student interviews, she will likely only interview with one admission counselor; the personal statement allows for the entire admission committee to hear her voice. This is the place for a student to advocate for herself. How does the application reflect the student's personality, story, and journey? Though a personal statement may not be required of all your colleges, if given the opportunity to share a personal statement, it is always recommended.

The College Counseling Center offers workshops and resources for juniors and rising seniors to brainstorm, draft, and revise their personal statements.

Supplemental Essays *(Responsibility: Student)*

Supplemental essays are essay prompts that are unique to each college. Many, but not all colleges, require supplemental essays. Even if a college indicates that this portion of the application is "optional," it should never be treated as optional, no matter how strong an applicant may be. These essays have the potential to help a student's application stand out from other applicants with similar credentials. Application review committees often meticulously review supplemental essays to gauge demonstrated interest, knowledge of the college, invested effort, and overall fit.

The number of supplemental essays required by each college usually ranges from 1-5, and the word count varies from 50-700 words. There are also several types of supplemental essay prompts, from prompts that asks each student to explain her interest in their college to prompts requiring each student to recount meaningful experiences in extracurricular activities. The College Counseling Center offers workshops and resources for juniors and rising seniors to brainstorm, draft, and revise their supplemental essays.

List of Extracurricular Activities *(Responsibility: Student)*

Most colleges require applicants to include a list of their extracurricular activities on their applications. This includes clubs, sports, church involvement, service/volunteer work, employment, family responsibilities, fine arts, hobbies, etc.

Application review committees are looking for both breadth and depth in activity lists. In other words, they want to see that students branched out of their comfort zone by participating in activities unrelated to their biggest interests. However, they also want to see that students took their passions to a deeper level to lead and help others.

A workshop on the activities list will occur during College Application Boot Camp.

NOTE: Some colleges allow applicants to upload a resume to their application. Although this may be optional and may seem redundant, students are encouraged to both complete the activities list and upload a resume.

Sometimes Required

Standardized Test Scores *(Responsibility: Student)*

Many colleges require students to submit SAT or ACT scores with their college applications. The SAT and ACT are viewed as equal assessments, and no preference is given to one exam over the other.

We advise every student to take one SAT and one ACT in the fall or winter of their junior year to determine which test is best for her. These can be official exams or free proctored practice exams. Students usually test better on one exam over the other. Once a preferred exam is identified, the student should pursue test prep for that particular exam. It is discouraged to continue to take both the SAT and the ACT repeatedly. By the time students conclude their junior year, they should have taken at least two SAT or two ACT exams, and they should plan to be done testing before senior year begins.

There are multiple benefits of taking a free proctored practice exam: it is free of cost, it gives a student a baseline score without having a record of taking the test, and it helps reduce test anxiety by providing a simulation to test day. The environment and experience of a proctored practice exam will be very similar to the environment when taking the actual test. Our test preparation partners at Goldstein Test Prep offer various practice exams throughout the year.

Goldstein Test Prep

Oakland Catholic's official test prep partner is Goldstein Test Prep. Families are encouraged to explore Goldstein's course offerings and tutoring programs when looking for test prep options.

Recommended Standardized Testing Timeline

Fall Junior Year	Fall/Winter Junior Year	Spring Junior Year	Summer Senior Year	Fall Senior Year
Take one SAT and one ACT (official or practice) *Compare scores and experiences and choose the test you'll stick with*	*Study for your chosen test by taking a prep course or doing self-paced, independent preparation* *Take an official exam (winter)*	*Do more prep (consider a different type than you did originally)* *Take another official exam*	*Do more prep and test again (optional)*	*Review which colleges are test-optional and decide where you'll send your scores* *Send your scores to your colleges*

SAT Testing Months

Junior Year: October, November, December, March, May, June

Senior Year: August

ACT Testing Months

Junior Year: October, December, February, April, June

Senior Year: July, September

Test-Optional

Increasing numbers of colleges are switching to a test-optional policy meaning that students can apply without submitting test scores. There are a few considerations when applying test-optional:

- Does the college require an additional essay, graded paper, or supplement to be submitted in lieu of the test scores?
- Does the college have a GPA minimum to apply test-optional? If a student decides to apply test-optional, she should be aware that more emphasis will be placed on the transcript. If a student has any holes in her transcript, test scores should be sent.
- Additionally, if a student's test scores are within or above the published median 50% test score range for a particular college, she should send her scores to the college. The published test score ranges for test-optional colleges are often inflated, as the students who decide to send their scores tend to have higher scores. Test scores can help a student if she has had average to below-average high school performance.

In addition, some colleges operate under test-free admissions, meaning that they don't review SAT or ACT scores for any applicants. Regardless of if your colleges offer test-optional, test-blind, or test-required admissions, we highly encourage each student to prepare for and take the SAT or ACT multiple times to earn her best score.

Superscoring

Superscoring is when a college accepts the best section score of each SAT or ACT. With the SAT, most colleges will consider the best Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing score along with the best Math score to derive the highest possible total score.



Some schools will superscore the ACT, taking the highest Math, English, Reading, Science, and Composite score. Superscoring policies vary from school to school, so it is important to read how they superscore.

Score Submission

Students are responsible for sending their scores to colleges through the College Board website or the ACT website. It can take up to 4 weeks for scores to be received by the college once sent through College Board or ACT, so please plan accordingly. Oakland Catholic does not print test scores on student transcripts, and we are not responsible for sending test scores to institutions on behalf of a student. Some colleges accept self-reported test scores from students, to be followed up with official scores if a student decides to enroll.

If a student is applying Early Action or Early Decision to a school, it is important that she looks at her colleges' deadlines and testing policies. Some colleges only accept scores taken up to a certain date (i.e. September or October of the application year). Please be aware of testing restrictions. Colleges do not penalize students for re-taking an exam and scoring lower; most schools only consider a student's best scores.

Interview *(Responsibility: Student)*

College interviews are sometimes offered as a part of the application process. The interview process varies at each college, so it is important to research your college's processes to find out what is offered. Some schools allow students to interview as a junior, others require that a student submits an application prior to interviewing, while others are by invitation only. Interviews can be offered both locally, virtually, or on-campus. The interviewer may be an admission professional, a trained alumni interviewer, or sometimes a student interviewer.

It is important to research if an interview is recommended, required, or simply informational. If an interview is offered, it is strongly advised that the student interviews in order to demonstrate her interest in the college and strengthen her application.

The College Counseling Center will provide students with college interview tips, tricks, and resources.

Demonstrated Interest *(Responsibility: Student)*

Demonstrated interest is when a student takes action to "demonstrate" her interest in a particular school. Some colleges consider demonstrated interest to be influential in the admission process, encouraging and welcoming students to demonstrate their interest, while others make it clear that demonstrating interest does not impact the admission decision.

Regardless of whether or not a college considers demonstrated interest while reviewing your application, most colleges are looking for students who are a good fit. Ultimately, both demonstrated interest and fit will reveal itself in supplemental essays.



Theresa Courtright
is studying Business Economics at Carnegie Mellon University

Other ways a student can demonstrate her interest in a college include:

- Attend a college representative visit at OC.
- Attend an information session virtually, locally, or on campus.
- Participate in an interview.
- Connect with an admission representative at a college fair.
- Visit and tour campus.
- Email the admission representative to ask questions, share updates, or reaffirm her interest in the college.
- Complete optional supplemental essays.
- Do research on the college and provide a strong and detailed response to a "why us" supplemental essay, reflecting your knowledge of the college.
- Open and read communication from colleges and follow up on any missing application or financial aid documents.

Students do not have to visit campus to demonstrate their interest. Researching a school and developing an understanding of the academic and social environment, unique opportunities and programs, and culture is a great way to demonstrate interest. Developing a comprehensive understanding of admission requirements and thoroughly fulfilling them is another way to demonstrate interest.

Fine Arts Portfolios/Auditions

Most colleges require visual arts applicants to submit a portfolio of work that demonstrates their artistic talents. Portfolio requirements vary by college, so it is important that students stay organized and informed while working on their portfolios. Colleges often offer an optional portfolio review session in which each student can discuss her portfolio with faculty and/or admission staff. Portfolio reviews take place virtually and in-person, and we strongly encourage students to participate in a portfolio review if given the opportunity.

Performing arts applicants are usually required to participate in an audition to demonstrate their artistic talents. The audition process usually starts with a recorded pre-screen submission then a potential invitation to a live audition. Again, pre-screen and audition requirements vary by college, so students should stay organized and informed while preparing for their auditions.

Prospective Collegiate Athletes

Students who want to continue an athletic career in college should work with their coach(es) and Oakland Catholic's Athletic Director to complete the athletic requirements of the recruitment process. Please note that even if a coach is recruiting you, you must complete a full application to the college to be considered for admission. Students who want to compete at the NCAA Division I or II level must create an account with the NCAA Eligibility Center in their junior year.

For more information about preparing for collegiate athletics, review the NACAC publication, "Get In The Game: Tips for Student-Athletes and Their Families" by scanning the QR code.

5 Application Plans and Deadlines

Most college applications open in August prior to the senior year of high school, though some applications open earlier. Students are strongly encouraged to wait until after the first semester add/drop period closes to begin submitting applications, as senior year schedules are not finalized until then. Most college application deadlines fall between October 15 and February 15, and we encourage most students to submit their applications during the month of October. Students are responsible for completing and submitting their applications by their colleges' posted deadlines. The College Counseling Center will work with students and families to guide them through choosing an application plan/deadline that best meets their needs. There are multiple types of deadlines that can affect a student's application strategy. These deadlines are outlined below. *NOTE: Most colleges don't offer all application plans. Check your college's offerings to determine your options.*

Deadline Types

Early Action (EA): Non-Binding

Common Deadlines: October 15–December 15

Admission Decision Release: December 15–January 15

Benefits: More favorable position in applicant pool, consideration for institutional scholarships.

Restrictive (Single Choice) Early Action (REA): Non-Binding

Common Deadlines: October 15–December 15

Admission Decision Release: December 15–January 15

Benefits: More favorable position in applicant pool, consideration for institutional scholarships

Drawbacks: Restricted from applying under certain EA/ED plans at other colleges (exact restrictions vary by college).

Early Decision I (ED I): Binding

Common Deadlines: October 15–November 15

Admission Decision Release: December 1–December 31

Benefits: The highest form of demonstrated interest, reflects very favorably to apply ED

Drawbacks: Can only apply to one ED I school, must withdraw other applications if admitted, cannot compare financial aid awards across schools.

NOTE: Student, parent and college counselor must sign an Early Decision Contract agreeing to the terms of a binding ED application plan.

Early Decision II (ED II): Binding

Common Deadlines: January 1 – January 15

Admission Decision Release: February 1 – February 28

Benefits: The highest form of demonstrated interest, reflects very favorably to apply ED, more time to research college and make a binding commitment.

Drawbacks: Slightly less favorable than ED I, must withdraw other applications if admitted, cannot compare financial aid awards across schools.

NOTE: Student, parent and college counselor must sign an Early Decision Contract agreeing to the terms of a binding ED application plan.

Regular Decision (RD): Non-Binding

Common Deadlines: January 1 – February 15

NOTE: Conservatories, performing arts majors, and visual arts majors usually have an earlier RD deadline due to required auditions/portfolio reviews.

Admission Decision Release: March 1 – April 1

Benefits: More time to work on your application.

Drawbacks: May miss institutional scholarship deadlines or honors college deadlines if waiting until RD deadline to apply.

Rolling Admission: Non-Binding

Common Deadlines: June 1 – July 31 (or no listed deadline)

Admission Decision Release: 2-6 weeks after receiving a completed application

Benefits: Can apply whenever you're ready, more spots are available when applying early in senior year.

Drawbacks: May miss institutional scholarship deadlines or honors college deadlines if waiting until December or later to apply.

NOTE: Many colleges that offer rolling admissions also advertise a priority deadline. Students should aim to submit their rolling admission applications in advance of their priority deadline to be considered for scholarships and increase their likelihood of acceptance.

COLLEGE OF THE
Holy Cross

"When I think about the students I've interacted with from Oakland Catholic, the first word that comes to mind is prepared. I have always found them to be fully engaged and inquisitive and they are consistently ready for whatever gets thrown their way. They seem to embody the standard of student we hope to see on our own campus."

–Michael Plourd, College of the Holy Cross

6 Admission Outcomes

Admit

This means you have a spot at the college you applied to—congratulations! Pay close attention to the academic program you were admitted to, as some colleges may offer you admission to the institution but not to the program you selected. Colleges may also offer you admission to a different campus than you applied for. Read your acceptance letter closely to understand what type of admission offer they're giving you.

Deny

For most colleges a deny response means this is the end of the road for you at their institution this year. Don't give up—many colleges accept transfer students, so you may be able to apply again next year if your heart remains set on that college. Some colleges will allow you to apply for re-consideration in the current year if you want to apply to a different (usually a less competitive) major. It never hurts to contact the admission office to inquire about other options.

Waitlist

Being offered a spot on a college's waiting list is often the most complex admission outcome because the process vastly differs from college to college. Below are some things to consider if you receive a waitlist decision:

- You will need to say "yes" to your waitlist decision, usually via an electronic form. If you do not respond by the required response date, you forfeit your spot on the waiting list and your decision becomes a deny.
- There are often additional application components for waitlisted students, such as essays and/or updated grades. Be sure you are fulfilling all outlined requirements and pay close attention to deadlines.
- Demonstrated interest often becomes very important when you are on the waiting list. Do everything you can to show that you remain interested in the college while awaiting your final decision, by emailing the admission representative and attending events.
- The number of students admitted off the waiting list differs by college and by year. There is truly no way of determining the "likelihood" you'll be selected.
- Most colleges will notify you if you were admitted off their waiting list after May 1 (see below for details on the May 1 enrollment deadline). Therefore, you should enroll elsewhere while you await your final decision.

Defer

Students who apply EA or ED I may receive a defer decision. This means that the college will review your application with the RD applicant pool because they want more time and information before giving you a final decision. This is neither a good thing nor a bad thing. If you are deferred from ED I to RD, you will be released from the binding contract. If a student is deferred admission in the EA/ED process, it is especially important that she continues to demonstrate her interest by reaching out to the admission representative with updates, thereby reaffirming her interest in the institution.

7 Decision-Making Process

Each student is strongly encouraged to visit her college campuses before making an enrollment decision. This is the best way of envisioning yourself as part of the campus community. Most colleges offer unique programming for admitted students. Other factors to consider when making your enrollment decision include:

- Financial Aid Award/Affordability
- Major/Program You Were Admitted To
- Institutional Values
- Comfortability with the Location
- Student Support: Academic & Non-Academic
- Campus Facilities & Amenities
- Post-Graduate Success

Unless one applied ED I or ED II (and therefore committed to a college at the time of application), each student must make her enrollment decision by May 1 of senior year, which is National College Decision Day. Typically you must submit an enrollment deposit (amount varies by college) and complete the college's enrollment form to officially confirm your enrollment, but the exact requirements will be outlined in your acceptance letter.

If your college does not receive an enrollment deposit from you by May 1, they assume you are no longer interested in enrolling there and offer your spot to another student off the Waiting List.

We look forward to celebrating with all members of the senior class on May 1 at the College Counseling Center's College Decision Day party!



8 Costs, Financial Aid and Scholarships

Costs

Pay close attention to each college's cost of attendance (COA) as you research colleges. This is the cost to attend that institution for one academic year. However, students rarely pay the full COA ("sticker price"), so it is important to continue your cost and affordability research beyond COA. Some data points to pay attention to include:

- Average cost after financial aid
- Average financial aid award
- Average grant amount
- Average graduate loan debt

We also recommend that each student completes her colleges' net price calculators as she builds her college list to estimate her SAI (see below), financial need, and financial aid eligibility. The net price calculator is available on each college's financial aid website.

Financial Aid

Typically, "financial aid" refers to need-based funds that a student receives based on her financial aid application. Almost all colleges require the student to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) every year they are in college. Some colleges also require the CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA, College Board's financial aid form to develop a more in-depth understanding of a family's finances. We also recommend that all students complete the PA State Grant application to be considered for the PA State Grant.

These forms open on October 1 each year (beginning in the student's senior year of high school), and families are encouraged to submit them before January 1. However, every college sets their own financial aid application deadline, so students must stay organized and informed to ensure they don't miss an important deadline. Please note that the PA State Grant application closes on May 1. There are 3 types of awards that can be given based on your need-based financial aid application:

Grant	Loan	Work Study
"Free" money from the institution, state, or federal government that doesn't need to be repaid.	*Money provided to the student by the institution, or federal government that will need to be repaid after the student graduates from or leaves college.*	*A program in which the student works a job on-campus and is awarded money in the form of a paycheck.*

Colleges determine the funds you are eligible for based on your Student Aid Index (SAI). Your SAI is generated based on your FAFSA data, and is the basis for your financial need at each institution. Some colleges guarantee to meet your full financial need while others do not.

Students and parents can apply for private loans (not based on financial need) to help cover the gap in the COA. However, you should be aware that institutional and federal loans tend to have lower interest rates than private loans.

Scholarships

Scholarships are "free" money that doesn't have to be repaid and are based on merit, such as academic merit and athletic merit. Some colleges automatically consider applicants for their institutional scholarships while others require separate scholarship applications. Again, students should be aware of their colleges requirements so they don't miss out on free money.

Some Catholic colleges also offer scholarships to Oakland Catholic students simply because they are graduating from a Catholic high school.

Students are also encouraged to apply for "outside scholarships," scholarships awarded through organizations other than colleges and universities that can be used at any college a student attends. Oakland Catholic maintains a list of local scholarships for seniors each year, and we also encourage the use of goingmerry.com as an outside scholarship search and application tool.

"The enthusiasm of Oakland Catholic students as they approach their college search processes is always inspiring to me! OC students are always active participants in the process of planning their futures, from being proactive about setting up campus visits to asking lots of thoughtful questions during college rep visits to their school. They are well-prepared, engaged, and informed as they make a very important decision. It's a joy to get to dream big with them!"

–Cara Franke, University of Kentucky

9 College Planning Timelines

9th & 10th Grade Timeline

Fall & Winter

Attend OC's Financial Aid Night

Attend the College Counseling Center's "Ask Me Anything" program

Start making plans for the summer. Consider applying for an internship or job shadowing experience, pre-college program, summer camp, volunteer opportunity, part-time job, etc.

Spring

Work with your teachers and school counselor to choose classes for next school year that will challenge you

Consider signing up for a summer camp, internship, job, etc.

Attend OC's standardized testing informational program

Attend OC's highly selective admissions informational program

Summer

Spend your summer doing something productive!

Participate in an internship or job shadowing experience, pre-college program, summer camp, do volunteer work, get a part-time job, etc.

Attend an introductory meeting with your college counselor in the summer before your junior year

Always...

Work hard in your classes and ask your teachers for help when needed. Get involved in activities at OC and in your community.



Da'Nerah Chisholm
is a first-generation college student studying Chemistry at Dennison University

11th Grade Timeline

Fall & Winter

Attend college visits at OC

Take a proctored, practice SAT and ACT exam and choose which test is "your test"

Develop a studying plan for the SAT/ACT exam and take your first official test

Use Scoir to begin researching colleges

Attend OC's Financial Aid Night

Consider visiting college campuses during break

College counseling lessons begin

Begin attending college meetings with your college counselor

Attend the Pittsburgh National College Fair (date TBD)

Parents: Attend the College Counseling Center's Junior Parent Night

Start making plans for the summer. Consider applying for an internship or job shadowing experience, pre-college program, summer camp, volunteer opportunity, part-time job, etc. (winter)

Spring

Work with your teachers and school counselor to choose senior year classes that will challenge you

Consider signing up for a summer camp, internship, job, etc.

Request letters of recommendation from your teachers

Continue visiting college campuses

Build your initial college list

Draft a resume

Begin brainstorming your personal statement topic and consider writing a draft

Take another SAT/ACT exam

Prospective NCAA Athletes: Create an account with the NCAA Eligibility Center

Fine Arts Applicants: Prepare material for your portfolio/ audition

Attend OC's standardized testing informational program

Attend OC's highly selective admissions informational program

Summer Before Senior Year

Spend your summer doing something productive! Participate in an internship or job shadowing experience, pre-college program, summer camp, do volunteer work, get a part-time job, etc.

Continue visiting college campuses and participate in interviews where offered

Refine your college list and complete a college application organizer

Complete the Net Price Calculator for each college on your list to determine financial fit

Take the SAT or ACT exam for a final time

Finish writing your personal statement

Attend OC's College Application Bootcamp (August)

Always...

Work hard in your classes and ask your teachers for help when needed. Continue your activities and consider taking on a leadership role or two.

12th Grade Timeline

Fall

Finalize your college list

Meet with your college counselor to discuss your finalized college list and applications

Continue visiting college campuses and participate in interviews where offered

Write your supplemental essays

Finalize and submit your college applications before their early/priority deadlines (October 15 - December 1)

Request your transcript and other OC documents from the College Counseling Center

Apply for financial aid by completing the FAFSA, CSS Profile (if applicable), and PA State Grant Application beginning October 1

Apply for scholarships at your colleges and from outside organizations

Check your application portals regularly

Attend college visits at OC

Attend OC's Financial Aid Night

Winter & Spring

Request your midyear grades from the College Counseling Center (if applicable)

Finish and submit your applications for any remaining colleges

Continue applying for scholarships

Check your application portals regularly

Begin receiving admission decisions

Compare financial aid offers when you receive them from your admitted colleges

Continue meeting with your college counselor

Attend admitted student events at college where you are admitted

Compare and contrast financial aid offers and submit financial aid appeals (if necessary)

Choose a college and submit your enrollment deposit by May 1 (National College Decision Day)

Accept your college's financial aid funds

Summer After Graduation

Register for and attend your college's first year orientation

Change your email address in your college's system (your OC email account expires July 31)

Regularly check your college email account and complete all to-do items/tasks assigned to you from your college

Send your AP exam scores and CE transcripts to your college

Apply for housing at your college and select a meal plan

Complete federal loan checklist items (if applicable)

Pay your first tuition bill in July/August

Always...

Work hard in your classes and ask your teachers for help when needed. Continue your activities and leadership roles.


NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
TULANE
Carnegie Mellon University
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY
EST. 1826
DUQUESNE
HOLY CROSS
HOLY CROSS
Oakland Catholic

10 Glossary/Index

ACT (Page 8): A standardized test used in college admissions, administered by the ACT organization.

Admit/Accept (Page 13): An admission decision in which the student is invited to enroll at the institution.

Coalition Application (Page 4): A college application platform accepted by more than 150 institutions.

Common Application (Page 4): A college application platform accepted by more than 1,000 institutions.

Common Black Application (Page 4): A college application platform accepted by more than 65 HBCUs.

Cost of Attendance (COA) (Page 16): the cost to attend an institution for one academic year, comprised of billable expenses such as tuition fees, and room and board and non-billable expenses such as books and supplies and miscellaneous expenses.

CSS Profile (Page 16): A financial aid application form administered by College Board that is used by some colleges to award financial aid.

Defer (Page 14): An admission decision for students who applied Early Action or Early Decision I in which the student's application is pushed into the Regular Decision round to be reviewed again.

Demonstrated Interest (Page 10): A college's measure of how interested a student is in their institution and how likely she is to enroll.

Deny (Page 13): An admission decision in which the student is not invited to enroll at the institution.

Early Action (Page 12): A nonbinding application plan in which students apply in the fall of senior year.

Early Decision I (Page 12): A binding application plan in which students apply in the fall of senior year and sign a contract that requires them to accept their enrollment if admitted.

Early Decision II (Page 12): A binding application plan in which students apply by January of senior year and sign a contract that requires them to accept their enrollment if admitted.

Enrollment Deposit (Page 15): A nonrefundable deposit that secures a student's spot at their college.

Syracuse University

"It's always a pleasure to visit Oakland Catholic. I find that OC students don't always ask the "typical" questions, but those that are more thoughtful and show the thoroughness of their college search and awareness of what is important to them in an institution. I appreciate their maturity and self-confidence to look for a college that is a good fit and not just a brand name. OC students are ready to take on new challenges and contribute to their future campus community."

–Jennifer Isaf, Syracuse University

Financial Need (Page 15): The amount of money that a family needs to receive to afford one year of a student's college education, as determined by the financial aid application and the college's COA.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (Page 16): A financial aid application form administered by federal government that is used by most colleges to award financial aid.

Grant (Page 16): A need-based financial aid fund that does not need to be repaid.

Historically Black College & University (HBCU) (Page 4): A college or university that originally opened to serve African American students.

Likely College (Page 4): A type of college on a student's college list in which the student's academic credentials fall above (or at the top of) the range for admitted students.

Loan (Page 16): a need-based or non-need-based financial aid fund that needs to be repaid.

Lottery College (Page 4): A type of college on a student's college list that admits less than 20% of their applicants, regardless of the student's academic credentials.

Net Price Calculator (Page 16): A federal tool that allows students to estimate how much they may have to pay at any given institution.

Personal Statement (Page 7): A college essay required by many colleges in which the student shares her interests, values, characteristics, and skills so the application review committee can get to know her.

Priority Deadline (Page 13): A fall application deadline used by many colleges that offer rolling admissions that ensures the student is considered for scholarships.

Reach College (Page 4): A type of college on a student's college list in which the student's academic credentials fall below (or at the bottom of) the school's average range for admitted students and/or a college that has a low acceptance rate.

Regular Decision (Page 13): A nonbinding application plan in which students apply in the winter of senior year.

Restrictive Early Action (Single Choice Early Action) (Page 12): A nonbinding application plan in which students apply in the fall of senior year and the student is restricted from applying under certain EA/ED application plans at other institutions.

Rolling Admission (Page 13): A nonbinding application plan in which there is no set deadline (or the deadline isn't until the summer after senior year.



Jillian Beiber
is studying Business Management at Boston College

SAT (Page 8): A standardized test used in college admissions, administered by College Board.

Scholarship (Page 17): A merit-based financial aid fund that does not need to be repaid.

School Profile (Page 7): A document sent to colleges by the College Counseling Center that provides a summary of Oakland Catholic, such as our grading scale, advanced courses offered, our students' average SAT and ACT scores, and our graduates' future plans.

Scoir (Page 3): A tool that Oakland Catholic offers our students to help them research colleges and build their college lists.

Secondary School Report (SSR) (Page 7): A form sent completed for each student by her college counselor that provides a broad overview of Oakland Catholic and the student's academic career at Oakland Catholic that is sent to colleges as part of her application.

Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR/SSAR) (Page 5): An unofficial record of a student's high school transcript in which the student translates her grades from her transcript onto an online form that is required by some colleges in place of an official transcript.





Student Aid Index (SAI) (Page 16): an index number used by colleges to determine how much financial aid a student can receive.

Superscore (Page 9): A form of each student's ACT or SAT score in which the college looks at the highest score in each subsection of the test across multiple test dates to provide a higher total score than any single test date.

Supplemental Essay (Page 7): An additional college essay required or recommended by many colleges in which the essay prompt is specific to each unique college.

Target College (Page 4): A type of college on a student's college list in which the student's academic credentials fall well within the range for admitted students.

Test-Free Admissions (Page 9): An admission policy in which the college does not consider standardized test scores for any applicants.

Test-Optional Admissions (Page 9): An admission policy in which the college does not require standardized test scores for their applicants but will consider test scores in the application review process if a student submits them.

Waitlisted (Page 14): An admission decision in which the student is admissible to a college but the college does not have enough spots to offer them an admit decision, thus placing the student on the waiting list while they wait for admitted students to accept or decline their offers of admission.

Work Study (Page 16): A need-based financial aid fund that does not need to be repaid monetarily, instead requiring the student to work an on-campus job to earn the money.

11 Appendices

Tips for Campus Visits

1. Mind the calendar.

Schedule your visit while school is in session. You won't get a realistic idea of student life in August (or if you attend during a special event like Spring Fling).

2. Meet the experts.

Talk to the current students—they may soon be your peers. If they have a problem or complaint, they will probably share it with you. If they love their school, they won't be shy about it either. Come prepared with some questions to ask—specific ones will get you more interesting (and helpful) answers.

3. Meet the other experts.

Stop by the admissions office and introduce yourself. Let them know what interests you about the school so they can direct you to the best place for further investigation. Collect contact information and send a brief, friendly e-mail thanking them for taking the time to talk to you.

If there is a sign-up sheet, add your name! Colleges do keep track of which applicants have demonstrated genuine interest in the school. A visit is a great way to demonstrate your interest.

Some schools will let you interview with an admissions rep during your campus visit. If this opportunity is available, don't pass it up.

4. Take the campus tour...

While it's the most obvious thing to do, the official campus tour is worth your while. (Find out if you need to register to get a spot.) It gives the school a chance to show off its best features, like the newly-built theater or their rooftop planetarium. While you're walking around, check out the flyers and bulletin boards and pick up a school newspaper to get a sense of what's going on.

5. ...then venture out on your own.

The official tour will probably steer you clear of the school's less attractive features, like the shoddy dining hall or the tiny gymnasium. Take your own un-official tour by wandering around campus. If there are any facilities that are important to you, find them and have a look for yourself. Make sure your destinations include the library and the first-year dorms.

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

"My advice to students in the college search is to trust the process—so much can happen that may guide or change your intended path to college as you move through the process. I know this to be true of Oakland Catholic students. They are open to finding the right fit and being active in the college search, without putting limits to where they can go or what they can do. They actively engage and trust in the college search process."

–Jack Evans, Saint Louis University

6. Be a student for a day (or night).

Some schools sponsor overnight programs in which you can stay with a current student. This is a great opportunity to get a deeper sense of campus life and interact with your potential future friends and roommates.

Even if you don't stay over, most schools will allow you to sit in on lectures. Browse the course catalogue before you arrive, or ask the admissions office what classes are in session that day.

7. Save the best for last.

You'll get better at visiting colleges with practice. As you compare schools, you pick up on the aspects you like and the aspects you're not so fond of. You also figure out the right questions to ask, as well as the best campus spots to gauge student life. For that reason, visit your favorite schools last, so you'll be in the best position to make comparisons to the others on your list.

8. Keep a record of every college visit.

If you visit many schools, your memories of them are bound to overlap. Use a note-taking or voice-recording app on your phone, or plain old notebook and pen, to keep track of the details you like and the stuff that you don't like. When more questions arise (as they most definitely will), you can fire off an email for an answer rather than visiting a second time.

9. Don't rush to judgment.

Try not to base your opinion of a school on bad weather or one boring class. There are bound to be sunny days and more interesting classes. Same goes for overnight visits—you might end up staying with a student who has very different interests than you do.

At the same time, trust your gut. Sometimes it's love at first sight. Other times, something feels wrong (even if you can't put your finger on it).

Source: princetonreview.com

Gettysburg COLLEGE

Oakland Catholic students exude excellence and (crucially) the self-advocacy skills needed to expand it. Not only are these young women prepared to begin college as engaged thinkers, doers, and students of consequence, but they know when to ask for help when they need it. They embrace diversity of all kinds (and the esprit de corps that comes with it), they're self-aware, and they consistently prove to be some of the best students at Gettysburg College. In a collaborative community like OC students are proving the value of a classical, community-based education and becoming standout college students because of it.

–Luke Frigon, Gettysburg University

College Fair Tips

Have a "PLAN OF ATTACK!"

- Look over the list of colleges and know who you'd definitely like to talk with.
- Also be open to discovering ones that are new to you. Consider talking with colleges that your college counselor suggested for you.
- Register in advance on the college fair website.
- To save time at the fair, you may consider printing out labels at home with your name, address, phone number, and email address instead of filling out college's contact cards while you're there.

Open with a Polite Greeting, such as...

- "Hi, my name is Jenny and I am a junior at Oakland Catholic." Adding your school gives them context and recognition of your academic preparation.
- They may not wish to shake your hand, but making the attempt goes a long way.
- First impressions are important!

Engage in a Conversation with the College Representative

- Asking vague questions will lead to vague answers. Instead, ask specific questions (see "Questions for Admission Representatives").
- If you truly are not familiar with the school at all and are just looking to get more information, be honest:
  - "My college counselor (mom, cousin, etc.) recommended I look into your school, so I thought I'd stop here and talk to you. Can you give me a brief overview of your academic programs and student life?"

Close the Conversation Politely, Saying Something like...

- "It was nice to meet you. Thanks for your help!" or "Thank you for your time; may I have your business card?" or just a simple "Thank you!"
- Consider following up with an email to the representative to thank them for their time and express your continued interest in their college.



McKenzie Morrison
is studying Psychology at Howard University

Questions for Admission Representatives

To use during a campus visit, college fair, or another interaction. Adapted from the College Essay Guy blog.

Majors/Colleges

- Does your school offer any unique majors?
- What majors get the most resources and research money on campus?
- What's the student-faculty ratio in my major?
- What percentage of students double-major?
- Do you have any direct admit/early guarantee programs?

Admission

- What is the profile of students in the most recently admitted freshman class?
- Are you test-optional for the 2022-2023 application cycle?
- What are the acceptance rates for early decision, early action, & regular decision?
- Do you apply to the college or do you have to apply to a specific major?
- Is the acceptance rate lower for out-of-state students (public universities only)
- Is the acceptance rate lower for certain majors?
- If I'm not admitted to my major of choice, can I transfer into it after my first year?
- Do you offer merit scholarships? Is there a separate application process for merit scholarships?
- What percentage of students return for sophomore year?

Financial Aid

- Do you consider financial need when making admission decisions? (need-blind or need-aware?)
- Do financial aid packages usually change after freshman year, or stay the same?
- What kinds of need-based scholarships are offered? In my major?
- What kinds of financial aid are offered here?
- What's the average amount of financial aid given?
- What percent of students accept loans?
- What percent of students have merit-scholarships?
- What kinds of work-study opportunities are available on campus?

In the Classroom:

- What's the average class size for freshmen?
- What's the common teaching style? Socratic? Lectures? Project-Based?

In the Classroom (continued):

Answers to the following may be major-specific:

- How much writing do freshmen tend to do?
- How much reading?
- Do faculty members teach the courses, or do TAs?
- How often are students asked to work in groups on projects? Is the academic environment collaborative or competitive?
- How often do students perform class presentations?

Student-Faculty Interaction:

- How do students typically get to know faculty and join research positions?
- What are examples of some research opportunities other students have participated in?
- In what ways are faculty members accessible and supportive to students?
- How often do students and faculty work on committees or projects together outside of class?

Campus Learning Opportunities:

- What percentage of students do community service or participate in community-based projects?
- Do students get the opportunity to TA or tutor other students?
- What honors college/scholars programs are available?
- Are there any distinctive learning communities on campus?
- What study abroad opportunities are available?

Career Services

- How diverse are the internship opportunities?
- What are the major partner companies that students intern with?
- What networking or career fairs are held each year?
- Are there opportunities to network with alumni on campus?
- What kinds of on-campus or local part-time jobs are available?
- What percentage of students graduate in 4 years? In six years?
- What's the job placement rate for last year's graduating class?
- How long does it typically take recent grads to find a full-time job in their field?

Academic Advising

- Is there a limit on credit hours, and any extra credit fees I should know about?
- What kind of support is available for students who are struggling academically?
- How often do students meet with their academic advisors?

Campus Culture

- What's an example of something that the student government has done for the school?
- How much diversity is on campus?
- What do students do off-campus?
- Is it easy to get around campus? Do students walk/bike/bus?
- How many students attend your school?
- Can you describe the "typical" student who goes there?
- Is there a lot of school spirit?
- What do students do for fun? Is it easy to get involved?
- What percent of students on campus participate in Greek life?
- What are some of your campus traditions?
- How has the administration dealt with issues of sexual violence?
- How has the administration dealt with issues of discrimination?

Campus Services:

- Is there a late-night shuttle service?
- Where do students go to study on campus?
- Which late-night study spots or lounges are available to students on campus?
- Could you tell me about the library services available?
- What tutoring services are available to students?
- What computer labs and IT services are available for students?
- Are there any art or music practice spaces available to students who aren't majoring in the arts?

Dorms and Residential Living

- Can freshmen have a car on campus?
- How many years is on-campus housing guaranteed?
- What percentage of students live on-campus all 4 years?
- What portion of dorms are shared rooms, apartments, or other?
- Are the dorms located all over campus or just in one place?



Lan Anh (Anna) Nguyen
is a first-generation student studying Biological Sciences at Princeton University

Dining:

- What are the meal plan options?
- Which off-campus restaurants are included in the meal plan?
- How late are dining halls open?
- How are the vegetarian/vegan options?
- How prevalent is recycling and composting?

Health and Fitness Services

- What services are offered at the health center?
- What mental health services are available on campus?
- Are the mental health counselors licensed, or are they graduate interns?
- How does the campus deal with stress and testing?
- How many intramural sports teams are on campus?
- Are the athletic fields available to all students?
- What are the gym hours? What facilities does the gym include?
- Are there any nature/outdoor activities hosted on campus?

University of Pittsburgh

"I have been with the Office of Admissions at the University of Pittsburgh for 27 years. We receive about 60 applications each year from Oakland Catholic students, and I have always found the girls to be well-prepared for their college search. During my visits to the school, they ask great questions about Pitt and the application process. Your counseling staff does a thorough job preparing them and communicating with me on the students' behalf. It is a pleasure to work with everyone associated with Oakland Catholic."

–Barry Duerr, University of Pittsburgh

College Interview Tips

Before...

- **Do your research on the college.** The best way to prepare for a college interview is to do your research. Look into the college you're interviewing for, learn as much as possible, and make notes about why you want to attend.
- **Practice, practice, practice!** Being interviewed is a skill that requires practice. Practice some common college interview questions (see below) with a trusted friend, teacher, family member, or your college counselor. Afterwards, ask your "interviewer" how you came across. You'll also get better after each college interview, so try to arrange your schedule so that your last interviews are with the schools you care about most. Remember that it is okay to be nervous!
- **Be prepared to ask your own questions.** Interviewers always ask you if you have any questions for them. Never say you don't have any questions. In advance of your interview, put some energy into coming up with creative questions with answers that cannot be easily found on the college's website. (Refer to "Questions for Admission Representatives" for ideas.)
- **Follow instructions.** Refer to the communication you received about the interview—parking, arrival time, documents to bring, etc. Read these communications carefully and follow all instructions. Know the name and title of your interviewer (if provided ahead of time).
- **If the interview is virtual:** Check your Wi-Fi connection ahead of time, ensure you are in a quiet environment with no interruptions, and make sure you have an appropriate video background.

During...

- **Arrive on time.** In fact, arrive early. If your interviewer is with another student or is not yet ready, sit at an appropriate distance so you are not impeding on their conversation but your interviewer is aware you are there.
- **Be your (best) self.** Showcase the side of yourself that is professional, mature and poised. Dress professionally in something that makes you feel comfortable and confident. Be polite and avoid using slang or other inappropriate language.
- **Allow the interview to be conversational.**

After...

- **Save your interviewer's contact information.** You never know when you'll need it again.
- **Be thankful.** Send a thank you note or email to your interviewer. If there's something about the interview that was helpful to you, let your interviewer know. If you connected with your interviewer over a book, common experience, or a band you're both into, then mention it! Otherwise, simply express your continued interest in the school and thank your interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.
- **Take some notes.** Did you learn something new about the college, especially something that couldn't be found on their website or in their brochures? If so, write this down! Did your interviewer provide tips or information on their application process or essay prompts? Save those things too. Finally, take some mental notes on how you feel the interview went, what you did well, and how you can improve for the next interview.

Sources: bigfuture.collegeboard.org, princetonreview.com

Common College Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself

Tip: Prepare a 30-second "elevator pitch" in advance of the interview, but don't appear scripted as you answer this question.

2. Questions about your fit with their college

- Why do you want to attend our college/university?
- What can you contribute to our college campus?

Tip: Be specific. Research the college ahead of time. For every remark you make about their college, follow up with a remark about yourself that explains how you're a good fit for them.

3. Questions about your academic interests and goals

- What is your favorite subject in high school?
- What do you want to study in college and why?
- What do you want to do after graduating from college?

Tip: Provide examples of your academic experiences throughout high school (both in and out of the classroom) that are related to your interests. Discuss how you think this college can help you meet your goals.

4. Questions about your personality

- What 3 adjectives best describe you?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What's an example of an obstacle, a failure, or a mistake that you learned from?

Tip: Provide concrete examples in your responses. Consider...How have you used your strengths to help others? What have you done to work on your weaknesses? Be honest and sincere in your responses.

5. Questions about your extracurricular interests

- What do you enjoy doing when you're not in class?
- What extracurricular activities do you find most rewarding?
- What is your favorite book?

Tip: Focus on the "why": why you find certain activities rewarding, why a book is your favorite. Again, be honest and sincere in your responses – don't say things to try to impress the interviewer.

6. Miscellaneous questions

- If you could change one thing about your high school, what would it be?
- What are three interesting things about you that I wouldn't know from your application?

Tip: It's difficult to prepare for all possible interview questions ahead of time. When a question stumps you during the interview, avoid speaking too quickly and don't be afraid to ask for a few moments to think about your response.

Sources: bigfuture.collegeboard.org, princetonreview.com

College Essay Tips

Adapted from the College Essay Guy blog.

College Essay Guy
www.collegeessayguy.com

1. Do not feel pressure to share every detail of challenging experiences, but also do not feel that you need to have a happy ending or solution.
2. Read it aloud.
3. Admission officers want to learn about growth.
4. Be specific.
5. Write like you speak.
6. Keep the story focused on a discrete moment in time.
7. Start preparing now.
8. Get personal.
9. Just make sure that the story you're telling is uniquely YOURS.
10. Keep it simple!
11. Honor your inspiration.
12. Revise often and early.
13. Write about things you care about.
14. Don't tell them a story you think they want, tell them what YOU want.
15. Be yourself.
16. Parents should NEVER write a student's essay.
17. Find a way to showcase yourself without bragging.
18. Don't read the Common Application prompts.
19. Proofread, proofread, proofread.
20. Take the pressure off and try free-writing to limber up.
21. Show your emotions.
22. Be genuine and authentic.
23. Ask 1-2 (but no more than 2!) qualified people to review your essay.
24. Use objects and images instead of adjectives.
25. Engage the reader's imagination using all five senses.
26. The set-up should be super clear.
27. Show then tell.
28. Provide insight.
29. "Trim the fat." (Cut out unnecessary "fluff" to meet the word count)
30. Split long sentences with complex ideas into two.

And finally...

31. Attend one of the College Counseling Center's essay workshops!

Office of Admissions
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"I enjoy working with Oakland Catholic students because I know that they will have a thorough understanding of the application process. When I meet with them, they have informed, relevant questions due to the excellent preparation they've received from the College Counseling Office at Oakland Catholic."

–Dawn Walker, Michigan State University

Notes

Notes

Notes



Spirituality, Scholarship, Service

College Counseling Center | 144 North Craig Street | Pittsburgh, PA 15213