

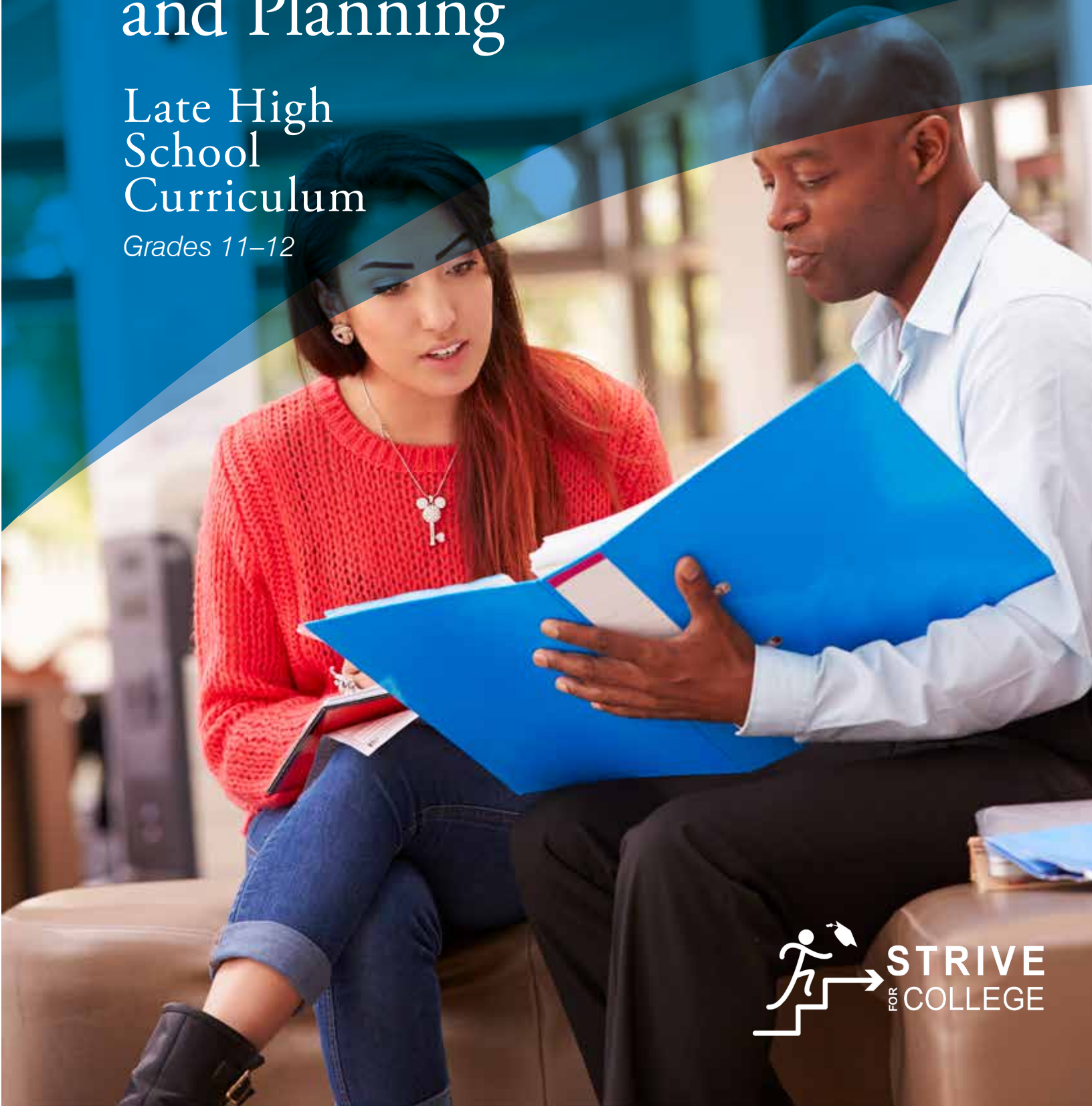
**NACAC**

National Association for  
College Admission Counseling

# Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning

Late High  
School  
Curriculum

*Grades 11–12*



# Introduction

Guidance in the later years of high school can put students on a successful path to college attainment and graduation. At this stage, a school counselor's role should include the following:

- Encouraging students to assess where they are in their college search and application process, and showing them what steps to take to choose the colleges that best suit their needs
- Assisting the students in putting together a plan for standardized testing
- Helping students assess their career interests and aspirations and begin researching colleges to pursue those goals
- Guiding students through the process of completing and submitting applications for admission to schools of interest
- Introducing students to the financial aid process.

## Late High School Sessions

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# 1

## Session 1: Goal Setting: Taking Stock

This session is for the students to talk about where they are in the college search process. (Have they begun to think about college, started a search, taken the SAT or ACT)? Some individual time with the Workshop Facilitator and a college admission checklist for 11th and/or 12th grade should end the session.

### *Objectives*

By the end of this session students will have:

- created a personal definition/description of college
- completed a personal résumé
- reviewed a college planning calendar for junior and senior years

### *Activities/Handouts*

#### **Activity #1: Where Are You?**

#### **Activity #2: How Do You Define College?**

*Handouts:* How You Define College and Considering College Types

#### **Activity #3: Who Are You?**

*Handout:* College Counseling Résumé

#### **Activity #4: What and When?**

*Handouts:* Preparing for College Junior/Senior Checklist, Getting Help from Your School Counselor, Choosing Your Team

## 1

## Session 1: Goal Setting: Taking Stock

## Activity #1: Where Are You?

### *Opening Discussion*

At this point, students may be at very different stages in the college selection process. Using the following questions, generate a discussion about what steps they have taken so far in the college search. The purpose of the opening discussion isn't only to discuss the following questions but also to have the students learn more about one another as they share their ideas. This discussion in many ways is an ice breaker.

- Why are you here? Ask students to make appropriate introductions depending upon setting and composition of group. Try to direct the students to talk about their goals for the session or program and goals for college attendance.
- What have you done, if anything, to prepare for college? This could be as sophisticated as doing a college search or as simple as taking college preparatory courses in high school or talking to a next door neighbor.
- Have you started the college search process? If so, what have you done?
- Have you visited a college? If so, what was the experience like?
- Have you taken the PSAT 10 or PSAT/NMSQT and/or SAT/ACT? Discuss.

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Session 1: Goal Setting: Taking Stock

## Activity #2: How Do You Define College?

### *Opening Discussion*

The purpose of this exercise is to determine how much the students know about colleges and how accurate their information is. Remember that “college” can include various forms of higher education, including community college and vocational schools.

### *Activities/Handouts*

#### **How Do You Define College?**

#### **Considering College Types**

### *Instructions*

1. Ask students to pair with a partner and then try to identify specific names of colleges among the categories of colleges listed to see what they know about different types of colleges.
2. When students are finished, use this exercise to generate discussion about the variety of options in higher education and to give students an opportunity to interact with one another.
3. After answering questions, ask students to turn to “Considering College Types” and read it together or silently, circling or highlighting any facts that interest them or about which they have questions.
4. Answer questions once students have completed the reading.

## How Do You Define College?

Two-year \_\_\_\_\_

What degrees are offered? \_\_\_\_\_

Four-year \_\_\_\_\_

What degrees are offered? \_\_\_\_\_

Ivy League \_\_\_\_\_

What distinguishes Ivies from other colleges? \_\_\_\_\_

Historically Black (HBCU) \_\_\_\_\_

What distinguishes HBCUs from other colleges? \_\_\_\_\_

Urban \_\_\_\_\_

Suburban \_\_\_\_\_

Specialized:

- Engineering \_\_\_\_\_
- Culinary \_\_\_\_\_
- Art \_\_\_\_\_
- Medical \_\_\_\_\_
- Fashion \_\_\_\_\_
- Technology \_\_\_\_\_
- International \_\_\_\_\_

Coed \_\_\_\_\_

Single Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Public \_\_\_\_\_

Private \_\_\_\_\_

Major Athletic Conferences \_\_\_\_\_

Religiously affiliated \_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate \_\_\_\_\_

Division III \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Considering College Types

Colleges aren't all the same. Different colleges and universities have different missions (or functions, or goals). While no two are exactly alike, most fit into one or more of the following categories:

**Liberal Arts Colleges** focus on the education of undergraduate students. Classes are generally taught by professors who see teaching as their primary responsibility. Because most liberal arts colleges are smaller than universities, classes tend to be smaller and more personal attention is available. As opposed to preparation for a specific career path, students who attend liberal arts colleges are exposed to a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. In addition, they select at least one area of in-depth study that is their college major. Many employers look for graduates of liberal arts programs and value their well-rounded preparation.

**Universities** are generally larger and include a liberal arts college, as well as some professionally oriented colleges, and graduate programs. Universities offer a greater range of academic choices than liberal arts colleges. They will likely provide more extensive resources in terms of library, laboratory, fine arts and athletic facilities. At many large universities, class size will reflect institutional size and most introductory classes are taught in a lecture format.

**Technical Institutes and Professional Schools** enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they want to study and emphasize preparation for specific careers, for example in music or fine arts, engineering, or technical sciences. You will want to be quite sure of your future direction before selecting one of these options.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** find their origins in the time when African American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students at HBCUs have a unique opportunity to experience an educational community in which they are a part of the majority. They find committed faculty mentors who encourage their expectations of success.

**Tribal Colleges** are similar to HBCU's, focusing on the needs and education of American Indian students.

**Hispanic-serving Institutions are colleges**, universities or systems/districts where total Hispanic enrollment constitutes a minimum of 25 percent at either the undergraduate or graduate level

**Women's Colleges**, with their larger numbers of female faculty and administrators, offer college women confidence-building role models, greater opportunities to serve in a full range of student leadership positions, and a heightened awareness of career possibilities for women.

**Community or junior colleges** generally offer the first two years of a liberal arts education, in addition to specialized occupational preparation. An associate degree is awarded at the end of a two-year program of studies, following which many students continue their education at a four-year institution. Student can also earn certificates for specific careers in under two years.

**Proprietary institutions** are considered for-profit companies that operate under the demands of investors and stockholders. They attract adult learners and part-time students in search of narrowly focused professional training opportunities. These programs usually offer a non-traditional format; many for-profits also have classes solely available online.



### *Other Important Things to Consider*

**Accreditation:** The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by colleges and universities meets acceptable levels of quality. Accrediting agencies, which are private educational associations of regional or national scope, develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. To participate in federal student aid programs, an institution must be accredited by an accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the US Secretary of Education as a “reliable authority as to the quality of postsecondary education” within the meaning of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended. This is all very technical, but the bottom line is if a college or university is unaccredited, it won’t be able to offer federal student aid. You should be very cautious about considering a school that doesn’t participate in the federal student aid programs.

**Size:** The size of a college or university will have an impact upon many of your opportunities and experiences. The range of academic majors offered, the extracurricular possibilities, the amount of personal attention you’ll receive, and even the number of books in the library will all be influenced by size.

In considering size, however, it is essential that you look beyond the raw number of students attending. Consider instead, the average class size for both first-year students and upperclassmen. Investigate not just the number of faculty, but also how accessible faculty are to students. Perhaps you are considering a small department within a large school or vice versa. Large schools may offer extensive support services for students with special needs or those experiencing difficulty. Smaller schools may not be able to fund similar programs. On the other hand, extra support may not be necessary if faculty work closely with individual students.

**Location:** Distance from home may be important to you. Is it important to you to be able to visit home frequently or do you see this as a time to experience a new part of the country? Some of you will prefer an urban environment with access to museums, ethnic food or major league ball games. Others will hope for easy access to outdoor activities or the serenity of a more rural setting.

**Programs:** If you have a good idea of something specific you want to study in college or a career for which you want to prepare, look for well-respected academic departments in this discipline at the colleges you explore. Talk with professors and students in these departments. Research relative reputation by surveying adults already in the field.

You shouldn’t limit your selection process to academic program issues alone. Studies show that many college students change their college major at least once during their college years. Therefore, it is important to pick a college or university that will offer you many appealing possibilities. Look for unique options such as study abroad, unusual academic calendars, or cooperative education plans, which may enable you to include several paid internships with your classwork.

If you are undecided, relax and pick an academically balanced institution that offers a range of majors and programs. Most colleges offer expert counseling to help undecided students focus.

**Campus Life:** Be sure that you consider what your experience will be like at a college beyond the classroom. To grow personally you will want a reasonable balance between academic rigor and an active social life. Find out what is available in terms of extracurricular activities, athletics, and special interest groups. Does the community surrounding the college offer attractive outlets for students? Are students truly welcomed by the community? Is there an ethnic or religious community in which you can participate? What influence do fraternities and sororities have on campus life?

Colleges will often require that you live in campus housing for one or more years. So, in considering social life, be sure to look carefully at the quality of life in the dormitories. Many colleges now offer residential-life options, such as substance-free dorms and special-interest floors for students who share academic, recreational, or community service interests. Others will offer dormitory-based study assistance, computer facilities, and counseling services. Ask if housing is guaranteed to be available to returning students. If so, how are dormitory assignments made after the first year?

**Cost:** Today's price-tag for a college education has made cost an important consideration for most students. At the same time, virtually all colleges work very hard to ensure that academically qualified students from every economic circumstance can find the financial aid that will allow them to attend. In considering cost, look beyond the price-tag to financial assistance that may be available. Decide the value of a desired educational experience and how much sacrifice (usually in terms of work and loan) you are willing to make to obtain your goals. Work closely with the financial aid officers at the colleges to which you apply.

**Diversity:** You will learn much from your college classmates every day—in the classroom and in activities. Many graduates note that this was an important consideration in their college choice. Consider geographic, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of the student body as ways of assessing your future learning opportunities.

**Retention and Graduation Rates:** One of the best ways to measure the quality of a college or university and the satisfaction of its students is by learning the percentage of students who return after the first year and the percentage of entering students who remain to graduate. Comparatively good retention and graduation rates are indicators that:

- A college and a majority of its students fit
- Sufficient classes and academic programs are available
- Responsible academic, social, and financial support systems exist for most students.

Visit <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator> or [www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org) to locate the information above by school

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Session 1: Goal Setting: Taking Stock

## Activity #3: Who Are You?

### *Opening Discussion*

Now is a time to reflect on individual goals and accomplishments. Give a brief introduction of the “College Counseling Résumé” and let students know that this information can help them find a college that is a good fit. Students should also be encouraged to share this information with their high school counselor and family as they work together to research colleges.

### *Activity/Handout*

#### **College Counseling Résumé**

### *Instructions*

1. Ask students to independently complete the “College Counseling Résumé.”
2. Try to allow time for individual Q&A with the students during this activity.
3. Use this interaction to help you determine the needs of this group and to plan future sessions.

# College Counseling Résumé

## Section 1—Family

	Parent 1	Parent 2	Guardian	Siblings
Name(s)				
Educational Background (high school, post-high school, etc.)				
Occupation				

## Section 2—Academics/School

1. Check the following:

	English	History	Language	Math	Science	Computer	Art	Other
Which subjects do you like the best?								
In which subjects have you done the best?								
Which subjects are more difficult for you?								

2. Your academic record: How would you describe your academic record? Are your grades above, below, or consistent with your ability? Why?

3. Your finest academic moment: Describe that achievement or experience.

Section 3—School Activities

Activity

Grade Level

	9	10	11	12	Beyond
<b>Athletics (sport and level [JV, varsity, etc.] and any awards)</b>					
<b>Extracurricular Activities (clubs, organizations)</b>					
<b>Employment and Summer Activities/Programs</b>					
<b>Church/Community Service</b>					

Be sure to include any leadership roles.

### Section 4—College/Career Interests

1. List college majors that interest you.
2. Identify the profession(s) in which you see yourself working.

### Section 5—Factors Affecting Your College Choices

1. Besides getting an education and preparing for a career, why you are going to college?
2. What type of college environment will challenge you to grow the most academically and personally?
3. What are your top five criteria in selecting a college?
4. In college, what extracurricular activities do you want to continue or begin?
6. What pressures, if any, are you feeling from yourself or others about going to college?
7. What are your major concerns about attending college?
8. College Type: Single Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Coed \_\_\_\_\_ Either \_\_\_\_\_

10. College Locations—Check regions and circle states of particular interest:

- Midwest (IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI)
- Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)
- Mid-Atlantic (DE, D.C., MD, PA, NJ, NY)
- New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, VT, RI)
- West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, ID, HI, KS, MT, NE, NV, NM, OK, OR, ND, SD, TX, UT, WA, WY)
- Canada, England, Scotland

If you are interested in specific cities, list them here and explain why:

11. Community (check all that apply):

- small town
- large town
- near a city
- near the mountains
- near the coast
- undecided

12. College size (check all that apply):

- under 1,000
- 1,000–2,000
- 2,000–5,000
- 5,000–10,000
- more than 10,000
- no preference

### Section 6—Final Thoughts

Is there anything else you'd like to share about yourself? Are there any areas where you still need support?

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## Session 1: Goal Setting: Taking Stock

## Activity #4: What and When?

### *Opening Discussion*

Remind students that even though the process can seem overwhelming, if they take it step-by-step it will be easier. They will feel as if they are in control of the process. Keeping a calendar of important dates and deadlines is absolutely essential throughout the college search and application process. Developing a solid relationship with the school counselor is an additional source of support, as is recognizing the role of family, friends, and community contacts.

### *Activity/Handouts*

**Preparing for College: Junior/Senior Checklist****Getting Help From Your School Counselor****Choosing Your Team**

### *Instructions*

1. Hand out the checklist for junior and senior year that will give students an idea of where they should be in the preparation for entering higher education.
2. Briefly go over the list letting students know that much of the information will be discussed in future sessions.
3. Ask students to check the appropriate boxes and keep the checklist in a safe, useful place.
4. Go over the handout "Getting Help From Your School Counselor," pointing out to students the importance of using their counselor to help them through the application process.
5. Ask students if they have met with their counselor.
6. Hand out "Choosing Your Team" and ask students to identify at least one person who can support them as they apply to college.
7. Tell the students to take home their checklist and résumé and use them to stay on track



# Preparing for College: Junior/Senior Checklist

## Junior Year

### Fall:

- Start your year off right by **talking with your school counselor about the year ahead.** Confirm that your courses will put you on the right track for college admission. Be sure to ask about test dates for the PSAT/NMSQT, ACT, and SAT. You'll need to register up to six weeks ahead of time.
- Start developing a résumé**—a record of your accomplishments, activities and work experiences. This will be an important part of your college application.
- If you haven't participated in many activities outside of class, now is the time to get involved.** Consider clubs at school, team sports, leadership roles, or involvement in your religious or civic community group.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT.** Taking the test as a junior will qualify you for some scholarship consideration and identify you to colleges as a potential applicant. When you receive the results electronically, review them to learn more about your strengths and weaknesses. Discuss the results with your family and school counselor.
- Begin to prepare for the ACT or SAT.** Free test preparation may be available at your school, your local community colleges, and community-based programs; in addition, there are many free resources on the internet. If you can't find the best websites, ask your counselor. You should plan to take at least one of these tests in the spring and again next fall during your senior year. *Ask your counselor if you qualify for a fee waiver.*

### January/February:

- Meet with your school counselor again to develop your senior schedule.** Make sure that you will be enrolled in the most challenging courses for which you are qualified.
- Register for a spring offering of the SAT and/or ACT.** Discuss whether to take SAT Subject Tests this spring.

### March

- Ask your counselor about summer opportunities on college campuses.** These can be a great way to find out what college life is all about and make you a more attractive candidate for admission to colleges.

**March/April:**

- Begin taking a more serious look at colleges and universities.** Make a file for each college and gather information about academics, financial aid, and campus life. Go to college fairs and open houses and learn as much as you can about the colleges online.
- Begin planning college visits.** Spring break is a good time to visit. Try to visit colleges near you and include a large, medium size, and small campus.
- Develop a preliminary list of colleges that interest you.** Write or email to request a viewbook and additional information.
- Think about lining up a summer job, internship or co-op.**

**May:**

- Take a look at some college applications** and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.
- Make a list of teachers, counselors, employers, and other adults you might ask to write letters of recommendation** for your college applications.

**Summer:**

- Continue investigating colleges.**
- Begin thinking about your applications. Generally, colleges will have their applications online by the beginning of August.**
- Begin drafting your personal statement. Visit college websites and the Common, Coalition, and Universal Application websites to find application essay requirements.**

## Senior Year

### August/September

- Register for the SAT and/or ACT** if you didn't take it as a junior, or if you aren't satisfied with your score and want to take it again. (Your counselor can help you with fee waivers). This will be your last opportunity to take the SAT and ACT before November Early Action and Early Decisions deadlines.
- Take a look at some college applications** and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.
- Visit with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate** and fulfill college admission requirements. If you're ahead of schedule, consider taking courses at a local university or community college to get a jumpstart on college credit.
- Take every opportunity to get to know colleges.** Meet with college representatives who visit your high schools during the fall, attend local college fairs, visit campuses (if possible). Ask your counselor if they know of special campus visitation programs.
- Narrow down your list of colleges** and begin to consider "safety," "match," and "reach" schools. Make sure you have the application and financial aid information for each school. Find out if you qualify for any scholarships at these schools.
- Create a checklist and calendar** to chart:
  - Standardized test dates, registration deadlines, and fees
  - College application due dates
  - Financial aid application forms and deadlines
  - Other materials you'll need for college applications (recommendations, transcripts, essays, etc.)
  - Your high school's application processing deadlines
- Some schools require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile.** Ask the colleges to which you are applying for their deadlines. Register as early as September. See your school counselor about fee waivers.

## October

- Some colleges will have deadlines as early as this month.** These would include Rolling Admission, Early Decision, and Early Action deadlines.
- It is time to file the FAFSA.** State funded grant programs have limited funds, so the earlier you apply, the better your chances of getting the grant money. And the sooner you complete it, the sooner you will have an idea of your financial aid options. Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR)—it should arrive four weeks after the FAFSA is filed or watch your email if you filed electronically.
- Ask your counselor to help you determine if you are eligible for an application fee waiver.**
- Finalize your college essay.** Many schools will require that you submit at least one essay with your application.
- Request letters of recommendations from teachers, school counselors, or employers.** Follow the process required by your high school or provide a stamped, addressed envelope, the appropriate college forms, and an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities to each person writing you a recommendation.
- Research possibilities of scholarships.** Ask your counselor, colleges, and religious and civic groups about scholarship opportunities. There are also some good scholarship websites, including Fastweb ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)) and The College Board (<http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>). You should *never* pay for scholarship information.

## November

- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications due this month.** Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it is submitted.
- Every college will require a copy of your transcript from your high school.** Follow your school's procedure for sending transcripts.
- Make sure testing companies (ACT or SAT) have sent your scores directly to the colleges to which you are applying.**
- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) will be available this month,** but cannot be completed before Oct. 1. Visit [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) to complete this application.

## December

- Begin to organize regular decision applications** and financial aid forms, which will be due in January and/or February.

## January

- Many popular and selective colleges will have application deadlines as early as Jan. 1.** Others have deadlines later in January and February. Keep track of and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork.
- If necessary, register for the February ACT (some colleges will be able consider it).**
- Ask your counseling office in January to send first semester transcripts to schools where you applied.** At the end of the school year, they will need to send final transcripts to the college you will attend.

## February/March/April

- Don't slack in the classroom** while most of your applications are complete and you are waiting to receive admission decisions. The college that you do attend will want to see your second semester transcript. No senioritis!
- Acceptance letters and financial aid offers will start to arrive.** Review your acceptances, compare financial aid packages, and visit your final choices, especially if you haven't already.

## May

- May 1 is the date when the college you plan to attend may require a commitment and deposit.** When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor and the colleges. Send in your deposit by the postmark date of May 1. If you've been offered financial aid, decide which offer to accept and follow the instructions given. Also notify schools you won't attend of your decision.
- Make sure you have requested that your final transcript be sent to the school you'll be attending.**
- If you are "waitlisted" by a college you really want to attend, visit, call and write** the admission office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.

## Summer

- Enjoy your summer.** It's been a long journey through high school and to college.
- Summer jobs** can help pay some of your college expenses and give you great career preparation.
- Make a list of what you will need to take with you for your dorm room.** The suggested list of items, room, and furniture dimensions and many other questions can usually be answered by visiting your college's website and searching under "Housing" or "Residence Life" for further information.
- You will most likely get a roommate assignment** from your college. Call, write, or email to get acquainted in advance. In your conversations and communication, you should be able to figure out who will bring what for your room.
- Some colleges will offer a summer orientation/registration.** Make sure to attend to meet fellow students and other important people on campus and to familiarize yourself with your new school. This is often the time you sign up for your fall courses.

## Getting Help From Your School Counselor

School counselors are one of the best ongoing sources of support for students who plan to go to college. They can be your allies and guides throughout the entire college process. If you are lucky enough to have access to a counselor in your school, it is in your best interest to visit him or her on a regular basis.

Start by making an individual appointment to introduce yourself to your counselor. If small-group college counseling or information sessions are offered, sign up. But don't only settle for a "group" meeting in which you will have to share time with other students. Make sure that you schedule an uninterrupted time for a private, one-on-one session. *Begin by introducing yourself and stating clearly that it is your definite goal to attend college.* Make sure your counselor realizes this is important to you and you are highly motivated!

Throughout your high school years, your counselor can help you:

- Plan classes that will prepare you well for college admission and success. Your counselor knows which high school classes are required for college admission.
- Review your academic record with you and suggest areas that need improvement. If you need to do some catching up, your counselor can suggest ways to do that.
- Begin the admission process by identifying the questions you should be asking—and finding honest answers. Questions such as: "Do I want to stay near home? Does the college have my major? How important is size?"
- Clarify and understand terms, ideas, and experiences that you encounter during research, campus visits or meetings with college representatives. Your counselor will be able to point you to websites that offer reliable, free information about college. Your counselor knows where to find information; for example in books, catalogues, and brochures that deal either with the admission process or a specific college or university.
- Identify special opportunities that may maximize your chances for being a well-prepared and appealing candidate for colleges. These might include weekend or summer programs on college campuses (often free for first-generation students), internships, or community college classes open to high school students. Your counselor will know about local college fairs, opportunities to visit college campuses, and even overnight visits to colleges that may be offered.
- Familiarize yourself with everything you need to know about the required college admission tests. Your counselor can make sure that you get registered for the PSAT/NMSQT (the practice tests for the SAT). They can help you know which tests (SAT, ACT, SAT Subject tests, or TOEFL—Test of English as a Foreign Language) will be required by the colleges to which you may apply. Counselors know how and when to register for tests. They help determine if you are eligible to receive fee waivers.
- Secure applications, identify application deadlines and prioritize to make sure that everything gets done carefully and on time! Your counselor can also help determine whether you are eligible for college application fee waivers.
- Complete your applications and polish any required college essays so that the final version you send to colleges will represent the best of your thinking and writing abilities. Make sure that you take a "rough draft" to your counselor early on. Leave plenty of time for revision and rewriting, prior to deadlines.

- Research how to pay for college. First, your counselor can give you essential information about the “need-based” financial aid application process. He or she can help you understand how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and, if required, other aid applications—such as those required by individual colleges or the College Board’s “College Scholarship Service Profile.” Your counselor may also be able to help you research scholarships offered by large corporations and the community.
- Write a letter of recommendation to colleges or universities. Many colleges will require that you obtain recommendations from both a counselor and one or two teachers. In addition, counselors are often asked to complete “secondary school and mid-year reports” (included with applications).
- Compare offers of admission and financial aid after you have heard from all of your colleges. This can be an essential step in making a final decision. Your school counselor can help you decide which programs are best suited to your educational goals. She or he can also help you compare offers of scholarships and need-based financial aid that may be sent to you in very different formats from different colleges.

There are a few other very important things to remember about working with your school counselor.

- Most school counselors have many, many students they want to help. So make it as easy as possible for your counselor to help you.
  - Make appointments early and show up on time.
  - Submit any forms that require counselor completion well in advance of due dates.
  - Carefully follow any procedures that have been established by your school for turning applications and related forms or for securing transcripts.
  - Keep copies of everything you mail or give to your counselor. Sometimes things get lost. When you keep a copy, nothing is lost forever.
- Make sure that you keep your counselor “in the loop” about what you are hearing from colleges. If there are any problems which arise, your counselor can act as your direct advocate with colleges.
- Whenever you have questions don’t hesitate to return to your counselor for advice, especially if you feel you are being asked by a college to do something that doesn’t seem “just right.” Your counselor will know the rules of the game by which both students and colleges are supposed to play.
- If you think it would be helpful, try to schedule a meeting with your counselor and your parent(s). There are parts of the college process where you need lots of help from them. This is particularly true when it comes time to completing the financial aid applications.
- Be sure to thank your counselor for assistance given. The counseling door is always open to students who show that they are appreciative of a counselor’s time and effort.

Finally, when all is said and done, and you have made it successfully through the college selection and admission process, make sure that you take time to *thank your counselor* one more time with a handwritten note (as well as any teachers who helped). If you have made good use of your counselor’s knowledge and assistance, the thanks will be more than well-deserved. When the student-counselor relationship “clicks,” your counselor will be able to offer the essential emotional support and encouragement you need during one of the most important times of your life. And your expression of gratitude will build a reservoir of good-will, should you need to return for further assistance at any time in the future.



## Choosing Your Team

Getting into college is a team effort. You are the captain of your application team, but you will need to surround yourself with individuals who can help make your college application shine. Like any ace squadron, your team needs members with different skills. Your team should include:

### *School/College Counselors*

They should provide college information and academic advice. Counselors are great sources of information and can open your eyes to college possibilities. Don't be afraid to pick their brains about potential schools and if you might be a good fit. Nobody knows more than your counselor.

### *Family Members*

They should bring support and guidance. The best thing your parents can do is help you make the most of high school by providing a good environment for studying and by offering the encouragement you need during this stressful time. They should also support you in your college decision.

They should avoid making decisions for you about your activities and interests or ultimately running your college search. The right school for your parents may not be the right place for you.

### *Friends*

They should bring support. Getting through high school and applying to college can be stressful. Lean on your friends for support, understanding, and stress relief because they're probably going through the same process. Be cautious of allowing friends to make decisions for you.

### *References*

They should bring the ability to speak positively not just about your accomplishments but about your passions and potential. These can be teachers or other adults who know you well. A reference might be someone you worked with on a volunteer project, an employer, or church leader. They should be willing to contact a potential college on your behalf. Most colleges require letters of recommendation from at least one teacher so it pays to be in good standing. Do you have a class you like or a teacher that is particularly engaging? A good relationship with a teacher can lead to a good recommendation, and this can help open college doors for you.

### *My Team*

School/College counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

Friends and Family: \_\_\_\_\_

References: \_\_\_\_\_

*Don't forget: Send thank-you notes to everyone on your team!*

Content adapted from *How to Make Colleges Want You: Insider Secrets to Tipping the Admissions Odds in Your Favor* by Mike Moyer. Copyright © 2008

# 2

## Session 2: Standardized Testing

The goal of this session is to introduce students to the various tests that are used by colleges, help them determine which tests to take, and demonstrate how to register for the tests.

### *Objectives*

At the end of this session, students will:

- understand the different types of standardized testing
- know how and when to register for the various tests
- have reviewed sample questions and testing strategies

### *Activities/Handouts*

#### **Activity #1: Understanding the Tests**

*Handout:* Understanding Standardized Tests for Juniors and Seniors

#### **Activity #2: Test Registration**

*Handout:* General Guidelines and Testing Timetable

#### **Activity #3: Practice Session**

*Handouts:* Brief Test-Taking Tips for Standardized Tests; Sample SAT and ACT Test Questions and Explanations; Sample Prompts for Timed Writing; SAT Essay Scoring Guide

## 2

## Session 2: Standardized Testing

## Activity #1: Understanding the Tests

### Opening Discussion

Most colleges require one of the two college admission tests—the SAT or the ACT. Usually colleges and universities give applicants the option of reporting scores from either of the two testing organizations. Students should weigh the advantages of taking both or either test. Retakes may be needed in the senior year because students don't always receive their highest score from their first testing. Bulletins describing the tests and practice tests should be available in high school counseling offices. For students who meet low income standards, test fee waivers are available.

Students should develop the strongest testing profile possible. The first step is to take a practice test (PSAT/NMSQT). Talk to them about the results as they prepare to take the SAT or ACT, respectively. The best way to get ready for the SAT or ACT is to take challenging courses, study hard, and read and write in and outside of the classroom. Students should be strongly encouraged to continue in math, science, and English for all four years of high school. While grades and coursework are more important in the admission process than testing, colleges that require the SAT or ACT want to see strong scores. Students should visit the ACT and SAT websites for free practice.

Some colleges may waive the ACT and or SAT tests for admission purposes, but may require test scores for placement purposes. Students should consult the website of the schools in which they are interested to learn about their admission and placement policies.

### Activity/Handout

#### Understanding Standardized Tests for Juniors and Seniors

#### Instructions

1. Ask students what test(s) they have already taken and plan to take.
2. Give students a copy of the handout.
3. Walk the students through the handout, emphasizing the differences between the two tests. Answer questions about which test(s) might be appropriate.

## Understanding Standardized Tests for Juniors and Seniors

**PSAT/NMSQT and PreACT Tests:** You may have already taken the PreACT and/or the PSAT 10 (Preliminary SAT as a sophomore. Ideally, all students should take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of junior year. Taking the test as a junior may qualify you for some scholarship consideration and identify you to colleges as a potential applicant. Reviewing the results of the PreACT and PSAT/NMSQT will help you to prepare for the ACT and SAT respectively. The results of these tests aren't reported to colleges. They are for your benefit only.

	SAT	ACT
<b>When is it administered?</b>	<b>Seven times</b> per year	<b>Six times</b> per year
<b>What is the test structure?</b>	<b>Five-section exam:</b> two Evidence-Based Reading and Writing tests (Reading Test and a Writing and Language Test), two math sections (calculator and no calculator tests), and the optional essay	<b>Four-section exam:</b> English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. An optional writing assessment is also available.
<b>What is the test content?</b>	<b>Reading:</b> context, command of evidence, extended reasoning, literal comprehension, interpreting informational graphics <b>Writing/Language:</b> context, command of evidence, expression of ideas, and conventions <b>Math:</b> algebra, data analysis, statistics <b>Essay:</b> analysis, evidence drawn from text	<b>English:</b> usage, mechanics, rhetorical skills <b>Math:</b> pre-algebra, algebra, geometry, trig <b>Reading:</b> long or short prose covering arts, literature, social studies, natural sciences <b>Science:</b> interpretation, analysis, reasoning <b>Writing:</b> evaluate multiple perspectives on complex issue (one prompt)
<b>Is there a penalty for wrong answers?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>How is the test scored?</b>	200-800 per section. A 1600 is the highest total score. Essay scores range from 2-8 on each of three dimensions (Reading, Analysis, and Writing). The Essay results are reported separately.	1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score. A 36 is the highest possible composite score. Optional writing score isn't factored into composite score.
<b>Are all scores sent to schools?</b>	No. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which scores to send (by test date) to colleges in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice.	No. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which schools will receive their scores AND which scores the schools will see.
<b>Are there other uses for the exams?</b>	Scholarship purposes. Some colleges may use scores for placement.	Scholarship purposes. Certain statewide testing programs. Some colleges use scores for placement.
<b>Best time to register?</b>	At least <b>six weeks</b> before the test date. The earlier the better.	Registration deadline is five weeks before the test date. Register at least <b>six weeks</b> before the test date.
<b>How to contact?</b>	<b>SAT Customer Service: 866-756-7346 or <a href="http://sat.collegeboard.org/contact">sat.collegeboard.org/contact</a></b>	<b>ACT, Inc. <a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a></b>

### *Additional Tests*

**SAT Subject Tests:** The SAT Subject Tests are hour-long tests based on high school course work offered across five subject areas: Mathematics, Science, English, History and Languages. The tests allow students to demonstrate knowledge and showcase achievements in specific subjects. Students should check the websites of colleges they are considering for more information on SAT Subject Test requirements. For more information on SAT Subject Tests, visit [www.satsubjecttests.org](http://www.satsubjecttests.org).

**Advanced Placement Exams:** Taken after a student completes the corresponding AP course, they can take the related, subject-specific AP Exam. Students earning a qualifying score (scale of 1–5) can earn college credit. The vast majority of colleges in the US, and universities in more than 60 countries grant students credit, placement, or both for success on the exams. To learn more, visit <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/takingtheexam>.

**TOEFL** (Test of English as a Foreign Language) tests a student's ability in English and is a test for students for whom English isn't the first language. The test measures skills in reading, listening, speaking, and writing in English and requires the student to combine two or more of these skills to respond to a question. It is usually an internet based exam given by appointment at designated test centers. Paper-based tests are offered only in remote areas. For more information go to [www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl).

2

Session 2: Standardized Testing

## Activity #2: Test Registration

### *Opening Discussion*

This activity will give the facilitator the opportunity to inform students it is important for them to register independently, on-time and accurately, and that fee waivers, as well as accommodations for disabled students, are available.

### *Activity/Handout*

#### **General Guidelines and Testing Timetable**

### *Instructions*

1. Give each student a copy of “General Guidelines and Testing Timetable.”
2. Walk the students through the handout. Ask students to highlight when they might be able to take specific tests.
3. Find out what to bring on your SAT testing day at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/taking-the-test/test-day-checklist> or on your ACT testing day at <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-day.html>.
4. If computer access is available and there is sufficient time, log on to <http://sat.org/register> or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) and walk through the registration process for each test.

# General Guidelines and Testing Timetable

## Guidelines:

- SAT tests are offered in August, October, November, December, March, May, and June.
- ACT tests are offered in September, October, December, February, April, June, and July.
- Registration deadlines for both tests are usually at least six weeks prior to the test date.
- Scores are posted online within three–four weeks after administration.
- Many students take the SAT and/or the ACT once or twice. There is no evidence that taking the SAT and/or the ACT multiple times significantly changes your score. Students have the option to choose which SAT scores they send (by test date) to colleges in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice. Students have the option to send their ACT score from a single test date. The SAT Essay and ACT Writing section are optional, but many colleges require or recommend them. Learn more at [www.sat.org/essaypolicy](http://www.sat.org/essaypolicy).

## Testing Timetable

### 11th Grade

- PSAT/NMSQT should be taken in October
- Take the SAT or ACT in the spring semester
- SAT Subject Tests in May or June, when appropriate for specific colleges
- AP tests in May if enrolled in AP courses

### 12th GRADE

- Final ACT and SAT Tests First Semester (should be completed by the end of December)
- Latest date to take SAT Subject Tests
- AP tests in May if enrolled in AP courses

## Helpful Hints for SAT/ACT Registration Procedure:

- Register on time to avoid a late fee.
- Use the same information each time (full name, address, birth date), otherwise a student may be considered to be two different people.
- Search for test centers nearby. If the student registers late, space might not be available.
- The high school code is necessary in order for the high school to receive the scores.
- The college codes should be included with registration once students know there is a good possibility they will be applying. Students can send score reports to four different colleges each time they register for either test. These four score reports must be used at the time of registration or up to nine days after the test date. We highly recommend that students take advantage of these score reports, as additional reports are subject to a fee. Many colleges require that the scores be sent to admission offices directly from testing agencies. If scores aren't sent to colleges, there may be a delay in making decisions and/or considering a student for scholarships. Students using SAT fee waivers receive four additional score sends free of charge they may use at any time during high school.

- Fee waivers are available from the school counseling office if a student meets specific financial criteria. Visit [sat.org/fee-waivers](http://sat.org/fee-waivers) or <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/fees.html>
- Students with diagnosed learning or other disabilities should check with their high school counseling office about obtaining special testing accommodations, at least a few months in advance of the test date. A special early application for registration required. Information regarding accommodations may be found at <http://collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities> or <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/accommodations.html>

*On the day of the test:*

- Come well rested
- Arrive early
- Eat a good breakfast
- Bring with you: admission ticket, approved calculator, at least two #2 sharpened pencils, a picture ID.



## 2

## Session 2: Standardized Testing

## Activity #3: Practice Session

### Opening Discussion

Understanding and practicing the types of questions asked on the SAT and/or ACT are absolutely necessary steps in the college process. Emphasize to the students that these tests measure critical thinking.

Research has demonstrated that test preparation improves scores on standardized tests for some students. This section will introduce students to sample questions and test-taking strategies. ACT and SAT practice tests can be downloaded from their websites at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) and [www.sat.org/practice](http://www.sat.org/practice).

### Activity/Handouts

**Brief Test-Taking Tips for Standardized Tests**

**Sample SAT and ACT Test Questions and Explanations**

**Sample Prompts for Timed Writing**

**SAT Essay Scoring Guide**

### Instructions

1. Go over the “Test-Taking Tips” with the students and remind them to keep the handout for a reference to review the night before taking any standardized test.
2. Simulate a testing environment by giving students several different test questions and asking them to complete the questions in a set amount of time.
3. Review the answers to the questions and use the discussion time to talk about the types of questions and strategies for answering them.
4. Go over the “ACT Science Question Explanation” and encourage them to go to the ACT website to review sample questions.
5. Give the students the writing prompts from both the SAT and ACT and give them time to brainstorm ways they might respond to the prompts.
6. Learn more about how exams are scored by visiting [sat.collegeboard.org/scores](http://sat.collegeboard.org/scores) or <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/scores/understanding-your-scores.html>.

## Brief Test-Taking Tips for Standardized Tests

1. Be sure to read and pay careful attention to directions.
2. Read every possible answer—the best one could be the last one.
3. Work as rapidly as possible, but don't work carelessly.
4. Eliminate answers you are certain are incorrect.
5. Don't spend too long on any one question. Instead, skip difficult questions and move on. Mark questions in the test booklet to which you need to return. Be careful to skip that same question on the answer sheet. Return to these questions if time permits.
6. Make sure to record every answer in the correct place on the answer sheet. If you change an answer, be sure to erase changes completely.
7. Make an “educated guess”—don't leave questions blank. Neither test subtracts points for incorrect answers.
8. Use every minute of the time given for the test. If you finish early, go back and complete questions skipped, make sure you haven't mismarked the answer sheet, and check your work.
9. Being familiar with the testing format and procedures will help you do your best. Be sure to take some practice tests prior to test day.

## Sample SAT Questions

### *Evidence-Based Reading and Writing:*

A subway system is expanded to provide service to a growing suburb. A bike-sharing program is adopted to encourage nonmotorized transportation. To alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area, stoplight timing is coordinated. When any one of these changes occur, it is likely the result of careful analysis conducted by transportation planners.

Which choice for the underlined section best maintains the sentence pattern already established in the paragraph?

- a) No change
- b) Coordinating stoplight timing can help alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area.
- c) Stoplight timing is coordinated to alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area.
- d) In a congested downtown area, stoplight timing is coordinated to alleviate rush hour traffic jams.

**NOTE: The passage and question set has been excerpted from the original.**

### Math Question #1

The mean number of students per classroom,  $y$ , at Central High School can be estimated using the equation  $y = 0.8636x + 27.227$  where  $x$  represents the number of years since 2004 and  $x \leq 10$ . Which of the following statements is the best interpretation of the number 0.8636 in the context of this problem?

Select an Answer

- A) The estimated mean number of students per classroom in 2004
- B) The estimated mean number of students per classroom in 2014
- C) The estimated yearly decrease in the mean number of students per classroom
- D) The estimated yearly increase in the mean number of students per classroom

### Math Question #2

If  $-\frac{9}{4} < -3t + 1 < -\frac{7}{4}$ , what is one possible value of  $9t - 3$ ?

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## Explanations of Answers to Sample SAT Questions

### *Explanation of Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Question*

**Choice C** is the best answer because it most closely maintains the sentence pattern established by the two preceding sentences, which begin with a noun and passive verb phrase (“A subway system is expanded,” “A bike-sharing program is adopted”).

### *Explanation of Math Question #1:*

**The correct answer is Choice D.** When an equation is written in the form  $y = mx + b$ , the coefficient of the  $x$ -term (in this case 0.8636) is the slope. The slope of a linear equation gives the amount that the mean number of students per classroom (represented by  $y$ ) changes per year (represented by  $x$ ).

Choice A isn’t the correct answer. This answer may result from a misunderstanding of slope and  $y$ -intercept. The  $y$ -intercept of the equation represents the estimated mean number of students per classroom in 2004.

Choice B isn’t the correct answer. This answer may result from a misunderstanding of the limitations of the model. Students may see that  $x \leq 10$  and erroneously use this statement to determine that the model finds the mean number of students in 2014.

Choice C isn’t the correct answer. This answer may result from a misunderstanding of slope. The student recognizes that slope models the rate of change, but may think that a slope of less than 1 represents a decreasing function.

### *Explanation of Math Question #2:*

**Any value greater than  $\frac{2}{4}$  and less than  $\frac{2}{5}$  is correct.**

Recognizing the structure of this inequality provides one solution strategy. With this strategy, a student will look at the relationship between  $-3t + 1$  and  $9t - 3$  and recognize that the latter is  $-3$  multiplied by the former.

Multiplying all parts of the inequality by  $-3$  reverses the inequality signs, resulting in  $\frac{2}{5} > 9t - 3 > \frac{2}{4}$  or rather  $\frac{2}{4} < 9t - 3 < \frac{2}{5}$  when written with increasing values from left to right. Any value greater than  $\frac{2}{4}$  and less than  $\frac{2}{5}$  is correct.

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# ACT Prompt for Timed Writing

## Intelligent Machines

Many of the goods and services we depend on daily are now supplied by intelligent, automated machines rather than human beings. Robots build cars and other goods on assembly lines, where once there were human workers. Many of our phone conversations are now conducted not with people but with sophisticated technologies. We can now buy goods at a variety of stores without the help of a human cashier. Automation is generally seen as a sign of progress, but what is lost when we replace humans with machines? Given the accelerating variety and prevalence of intelligent machines, it is worth examining the implications and meaning of their presence in our lives.

*Read and carefully consider these perspectives. Each suggests a particular way of thinking about the increasing presence of intelligent machines.*

Perspective One	Perspective Two	Perspective Three
What we lose with the replacement of people by machines is some part of our own humanity. Even our mundane daily encounters no longer require from us basic courtesy, respect, and tolerance for other people	Machines are good at low-skill, repetitive jobs, and at high-speed extremely precise jobs. In both cases they work better than humans. This efficiency leads to a more prosperous and progress world for everyone.	Intelligent machines challenge our long-standing ideas about what humans are or can be. This is good because it pushes both humans and machines toward new, unimagined possibilities.

## Essay Task

Write a unified, coherent essay about the increasing presence of intelligent machines. In your essay, be sure to:

- Clearly state your own perspective on the issue and analyze the relationship between your perspective and at least one other perspective
- Develop and support your ideas with reasoning and examples
- Organize your ideas clearly and logically
- Communicate your ideas effectively in standard written English

Your perspective may be in full agreement with any of those given, in partial agreement, or completely different.

## Planning Your Essay

*Your work on these prewriting pages will not be scored.*

Use the space below and on the back cover to generate ideas and plan your essay. You may wish to consider the following as you think critically about the task:

Strengths and weaknesses of different perspectives on the issue

- What insights do they offer, and what do they fail to consider?
- Why might they be persuasive to others, or why might they fail to persuade?

Your own knowledge, experience, and values

- What is your perspective on this issue, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?
- How will you support your perspective in your essay?

## SAT Prompt for Timed Writing

The optional essay prompt (question) shown below, or a nearly identical one, is used every time the SAT is given. “As you read the passage below, consider how [the author] uses evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas

Write an essay in which you explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience that [author’s claim]. In your essay, analyze how [the author] uses one or more of the features listed above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of [his/her] argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage. Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author’s] claims, but rather explain how the author builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience.”

# SAT Essay Scoring Guide

To learn more about the process, visit [sat.org/essay](http://sat.org/essay).

## *A Framework for Scoring SAT Essays*

The SAT Scoring Guide *expresses the criteria readers use to evaluate and score the student essays*. The guide is structured on a four-point scale. The College Board trains every scorer to hold every student to the same standards. Responses to the optional SAT Essay are scored using a carefully designed process. Two different people will read and score a student's essay. Each scorer awards 1–4 points for each dimension: reading, analysis, and writing. The two scores for each dimension are added. Students receive three scores for the SAT Essay—one for each dimension—ranging from 2–8 points.

## *Reading Scoring Guide*

### **Score of 4**

- Demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text.
- Shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and of most important details and how they interrelate, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the text.
- Is free of errors of fact or interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes skillful use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating a complete understanding of the source text.

### **Score of 3**

- Demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text.
- Shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and important details.
- Is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes appropriate use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating an understanding of the source text.

### **Score of 2**

- Demonstrates some comprehension of the source text.
- Shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) but not of important details.
- May contain errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes limited and/or haphazard use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating some understanding of the source text.

### **Score of 1**

- Demonstrates little or no comprehension of the source text.
- Fails to show an understanding of the text's central idea(s), and may include only details without reference to central idea(s).
- May contain numerous errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes little or no use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating little or no understanding of the source text.

## Analysis Scoring Guide

### Score of 4

- Offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task.
- Offers a thorough, well-considered evaluation of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing.
- Contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- Focuses consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

### Score of 3

- Offers an effective analysis of the source text and demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task.
- Competently evaluates the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing.
- Contains relevant and sufficient support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- Focuses primarily on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

### Score of 2

- Offers limited analysis of the source text and demonstrates only partial understanding of the analytical task.
- Identifies and attempts to describe the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing, but merely asserts rather than explains their importance, or one or more aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.
- Contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- May lack a clear focus on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

### Score of 1

- Offers little or no analysis or ineffective analysis of the source text and demonstrates little or no understanding of the analytic task.
- Identifies without explanation some aspects of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's choosing.
- Or numerous aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.
- Contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made, or support is largely irrelevant.
- May not focus on features of the text that are relevant to addressing the task.
- Or the response offers no discernible analysis (e.g., is largely or exclusively summary).



## Writing Scoring Guide

### Score of 4

- Is cohesive and demonstrates a highly effective use and command of language.
- Includes a precise central claim.
- Includes a skillful introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.
- Has a wide variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates a consistent use of precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a strong command of the conventions of standard written English and is free or virtually free of errors.

### Score of 3

- Is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language.
- Includes a central claim or implicit controlling idea.
- Includes an effective introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a clear progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.
- Has variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates some precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a good control of the conventions of standard written English and is free of significant errors that detract from the quality of writing.

### Score of 2

- Demonstrates little or no cohesion and limited skill in the use and control of language.
- May lack a clear central claim or controlling idea or may deviate from the claim or idea over the course of the response.
- May include an ineffective introduction and/or conclusion. The response may demonstrate some progression of ideas within paragraphs but not throughout the response.
- Has limited variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive.
- Demonstrates general or vague word choice; word choice may be repetitive. The response may deviate noticeably from a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a limited control of the conventions of standard written English and contains errors that detract from the quality of writing and may impede understanding.

### Score of 1

- Demonstrates little or no cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language.
- May lack a clear central claim or controlling idea.
- Lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The response doesn't have a discernible progression of ideas.
- Lacks variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive. The response demonstrates general and vague word choice; word choice may be poor or inaccurate. The response may lack a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a weak control of the conventions of standard written English and may contain numerous errors that undermine the quality of writing.

# 3

## Session 3: The College Search

The purpose of this session is to familiarize students with the variety of college options open to them and ways in which to access college information. The emphasis should be on opportunity and access, not on the criteria for admission, which will come in a later session. Using Session I as a starting point, students will embark on a college search using counselor expertise, web resources (if available), and viewbooks/catalogues/guidebooks.

### *Objectives*

By the end of this session, students will:

- know how to prioritize their criteria for finding appropriate schools
- understand the importance of finding a good fit
- find relevant information about colleges
- learn how to make the most of a campus visit as a research tool

### *Activities/Handouts*

#### **Activity #1: Finding the Right Fit**

*Handouts:* Résumé from Session 1, Criteria Chart

#### **Activity #2: Researching Colleges**

*Handouts:* Criteria Chart from Activity #1, Websites Focused on College Exploration

#### **Activity #3: Making the Most of a Campus Visit**

*Handouts:* Campus Visits, College Visit Checklist, College Comparison, Campus Visit Checklist, and College Comparison Worksheet

## 3

## Session 3: The College Search

## Activity 1: Finding the Right Fit

### *Opening Discussion*

This session focuses on how to search for the right “fit” in a college. Based on the initial session’s discussion of types of colleges, ask students what kinds of institutions they think they might want to consider. What majors might they want to pursue?

### *Activity/Handouts*

#### **Résumé from Session 1**

#### **Criteria**

### *Instructions*

1. Ask students to review their personal résumés from Session 1, looking especially at Sections 4 and 5.
2. Direct students to fill in the criteria column of the chart, keeping in mind the things most important to them when considering a college. Students can use the words listed below the chart or look at their résumés for ideas. If they know of particular colleges, they can add them and fill in the blanks if they are able. They will be using this chart for the next exercise.

# Criteria

Primary Selection Criteria	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
<b>Other Criteria</b>					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

### Location

Distance from Home/  
Travel  
School Setting (Urban,  
Rural)  
Location and Size of  
Nearest City

### Size

Enrollment  
Physical Size of  
Campus

### Environment

Co-ed, Male, Female  
Diversity

### Admission Profile

Average Test Scores,  
GPA, Class Rank

### Academics

Your Major Offered  
Special Requirements  
Accreditation  
Student-Faculty Ratio  
Typical Class Size

### College Expenses

Tuition / Fees  
Room and Board  
Cost of Attendance  
Percent Received Aid  
Scholarships  
Federal Work Study

### Housing

Residence Hall  
Types and Sizes  
Food Plan  
Fees  
On / Off Campus

### Facilities

Academic  
Recreational  
Other

### Job Placement Services

Career Center

### Activities

Clubs/Organizations  
Greek Life  
Athletics  
Intramurals  
Other

### Opinion of Person Who Has Attended this School Recently

Their opinion

### Type of School

Public university  
Private college  
Military Academy  
Community College  
Trade School  
For-profit

## 3

## Session 3: The College Search

## Activity #2: Researching Colleges

### *Opening Discussion*

Students need to examine a variety of sources so they can begin to see the similarities and differences among colleges and universities. They shouldn't think about cost at this point, but rather, qualities, and characteristics colleges have to offer.

### *Handouts*

**Websites Focused on College Exploration****Criteria Checklist from Activity #1****Viewbooks, catalogues, and guidebooks**

### *Instructions*

1. If there is internet access, show the students several websites (see handout) and guide them through a representative number, pointing out information about majors, residential options, the admission/application site (which will be covered in a later session), and other aspects as you see fit.
2. Viewbooks and guidebooks should be on hand, too. Ask students to read a description of a college from a guidebook and talk about what they think they would like or not like about that school.
3. Have students look at resources independently and fill in their "Criteria Checklist" of five schools.
4. Once they have developed a list, they should return to the resource books or go to the college websites to learn more about whether "the fit" is right for them.

## Websites Focused on College Exploration

### College Information

Center for Student Opportunity: [www.imfirst.org](http://www.imfirst.org)  
Coalition Application:  
[www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)  
College Navigator: <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>  
College Board: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)  
Colleges That Change Lives: [www.ctcl.org](http://www.ctcl.org)  
Hobsons' CollegeView: [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)  
KnowHow2Go: [www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org)  
Peterson's: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)  
The Common Application: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)  
Undocumented Students:  
[www.nacacnet.org/UndocumentedStudents](http://www.nacacnet.org/UndocumentedStudents)  
Universal College Application:  
[www.universalcollegeapp.com](http://www.universalcollegeapp.com)

### Financial Aid and Scholarship information

College ScoreCard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>  
CSS/Financial Aid Profile:  
<https://profileonline.collegeboard.org>  
FAFSA4caster: [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)  
Fastweb: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)  
Federal Student Aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>  
FindTuition: [www.findtuition.com](http://www.findtuition.com)  
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):  
[www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)  
Sallie Mae: [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)  
The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid:  
[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

### Testing

ACT Fee Waiver: [www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html](http://www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html)  
ACT: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)  
Test Prep from Number2.com: [www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)  
Kaplan Test Prep: [www.kaptest.com](http://www.kaptest.com)  
PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT: [www.psat.org](http://www.psat.org)  
SAT Fee Waiver: [www.sat.org/fee-waivers](http://www.sat.org/fee-waivers)  
SAT Prep from Khan Academy: [www.satpractice.org](http://www.satpractice.org)  
SAT: [www.sat.org](http://www.sat.org)  
The Princeton Review: [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

### Non-Profit Organizations

First In The Family: [www.firstinthefamily.org/highschool](http://www.firstinthefamily.org/highschool)  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities:  
[www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)  
National Association for College Admission  
Counseling: [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)  
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher  
Education: [www.nafeonation.org](http://www.nafeonation.org)  
United Negro College Fund (UNCF): [www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org)

### Athletics

Athletic Aid: [www.athleticaid.com](http://www.athleticaid.com)  
National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics: <http://naia.org>  
NCAA Eligibility Center:  
[www.ncaa.org/eligibility-center](http://www.ncaa.org/eligibility-center)

### Careers

The Occupational Outlook Handbook:  
[www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh)  
Roadmap to Careers:  
<https://collegeboard.roadtripnation.com>

## 3

## Session 3: The College Search

## Activity #3: Making the Most of a Campus Visit

### Opening Discussion

To introduce this activity, ask students to consider the following: People who want to buy a car often spend a lot of time test-driving cars, but once they buy one and drive it off the lot, the car depreciates in value. The opposite is true of test-driving a college: The time a student spends visiting a college can help him or her know if the school is a good fit. Once the student enrolls in a college, the school never loses value. For students who may not have opportunities to visit college campuses, attending college fairs and visiting with college representatives who come to their high schools provide a reasonable substitute.

### Activity/Handouts

**Campus Visits****The College Visit Checklist****Campus Visit Checklist****College Comparison**

### Instructions

Review the College Visit Checklist

1. Go over "The Campus Visit" allowing time for questions and discussion.
2. Give each student the "College Visit Checklist" and talk about how the list can also be useful if a student attends a college fair.
3. Describe what occurs on a college tour and in an information session.
4. Talk about how students can possibly use the campus visit as a time to have an interview, if the college requires or allows one.
5. Emphasize the importance of filling in the comparison sheet as soon after a visit as possible and securing the name and contact information of someone in the admission office.
6. Give students the names of four schools nearby and ask them to find out when the schools schedule tours and information sessions. Students should use the available resources to find this information.
7. Describe the differences among safety, match, and reach schools.

## Campus Visits

One of the most important parts of your college research is the campus visit. Visiting the colleges on your list will give you a firsthand impression of the students, faculty, staff, facilities, and programs. On a visit you can learn what the admission office is looking for in its applicants, gain a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere, see the study/living/recreation facilities, talk with students, and get a sense of the community.

### *When to Visit:*

- Admission offices are open all year, but visiting when classes are in session is best. If you visit in the summer, you can certainly learn about admission and get a general tour of the campus, but it might be hard to get a good sense of the atmosphere of the college.
- The best time to visit? Spring Break of your junior year can be ideal. Even if you aren't certain where you might eventually apply, if you can visit one large, one medium size, and one small school, you will be better prepared to make final decisions about where to apply.
- Once you have narrowed your list in the fall of the senior year, you may want to make return overnight visits to schools to which you will be applying. On these visits, plan to go to classes and interact with students.
- If at all possible, try to visit colleges before you apply. You may discover the school isn't at all what you had thought it would be. However, attending accepted students visit programs at the colleges you have visited previously can help you narrow down your choices.
- Some colleges will offer spring programs for juniors and fall programs for seniors. Check online or contact the admission office since you may need to make a reservation.

### *Plan Your Visit:*

- A good campus visit takes two-four hours, including time to get a sense of the surrounding town or area. Don't try to visit more than two schools in one day.
- Figure out an itinerary: where you want to travel, how you will travel, how far one school is from another.
- Call the admission office at least two weeks ahead of time to schedule your visit. Admission offices have set times for tours and information.
- Think of all the things you want to do when you visit and ask what the admission office can help you with: talking with an admission officer, taking a tour, attending a class, meeting with a professor in an area that interests you, eating a meal on campus, talking with a coach or advisor of an extracurricular activity that interests you, etc.
- Research each college before you go visit and make a list of specific questions to ask.
- Contact students you might know at the school before you plan to visit.



### *When You Visit:*

- Focus on people, places, and programs during your visit.
- Talk to as many people as you can: students, dining hall workers, tour guides, faculty.
- Look at a campus newspaper and check out campus bulletin boards.
- Wander through snack bars and student centers and observe how students interact with each other.
- Keep track of all names of people you talk with, especially in the admission office.
- Attend an admission session and take an official tour. Listen to the tour guide, but don't jump to a conclusion about a particular school based solely on your experience with a tour guide.
- If you are meeting or interviewing with an admission staff member, be on time, be yourself, ask questions that deal with your particular needs, and make sure you mention anything about your background or achievements that you want the admission office to know.

### *After the Visit:*

- Fill out the college comparison sheet before you get to another campus.
- Send a thank you note to any admission person you meet.
- Look ahead to fall of the senior year to plan a follow-up, overnight visit.

DECIDE

## College Visit Checklist

To help you find the right college, fill out one of these forms each time you visit a school.

College Name

City

State

Size

Tuition

Room/Board

Financial Aid Options

### Admissions Contact

Name

Email

Phone

### To-Do Checklist

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to professors              | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to students                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit the library               | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit student housing                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour campus                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Read bulletin boards                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit in on a class               | <input type="checkbox"/> Check out recreational facilities     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at a cafeteria              | <input type="checkbox"/> Check out student activities          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to an admissions counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> Tour the city around campus           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the college newspaper      | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at an off-campus student hang-out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check out computer labs         | <input type="checkbox"/> Picture yourself living here          |

### Rate It

On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best, rate the following:

- People \_\_\_\_\_
- Social Life \_\_\_\_\_
- Classrooms \_\_\_\_\_
- Residence Halls \_\_\_\_\_
- Town \_\_\_\_\_
- Campus \_\_\_\_\_
- Food \_\_\_\_\_

### Ask a Student

What is the best part about this college?

What is the worst part?

What is a typical day like?

What do the students do on the weekends?

How are classes structured?

Why did you choose this college?

### The Best Part About My Visit

### The Worst Part About My Visit



## Campus Visit Checklist

When you visit a campus, it is important that you ask the right types of questions:

### Look at Equipment and School Facilities

- Are the facilities and equipment up-to-date and operating?
- Is the equipment similar to what you will be using on the job?
- Is the library good for studying and research?
- How large are the dorm rooms? What types of furniture are provided/allowed?
- Are the dorm rooms quiet enough for studying?
- What is the cafeteria like?
- Are there plenty of computer labs?
- Do students get free e-mail and Internet access?

### Sit In on a Class or Two

- Do the instructors seem knowledgeable?
- Are the students participating in classroom activities?
- What kinds of work are the students doing?
- How large/small are the classes?

### Talk with Current Students in the Program

- How long have they been in school?
- Are they learning what they need to know to get a job?
- What is their opinion of the instructors? Are instructors available outside of class?
- Do the instructors spend time with them to be sure they understand the material?
- How much time is needed for studying and other work outside class?
- Have they had any problems with the school, the instructors or the classes?
- What do they like most/least about the school/program?
- How do they spend their free time?
- What are the other students like?

### Talk with Instructors in the Program

- What are the academic requirements in the program?
- What kinds of courses are offered? How often are they offered?
- How many students are in the program? How many are accepted into the program each year?
- How long does it take most students to complete the program?
- How long have they taught at the school? Do they teach full time or part time?
- What background do they have in the field? How does it relate to the courses they teach?
- What types of activities are they involved in that relate to the field of study?

### Talk with an Admissions Counselor

- Has the institution and its programs been accredited by a recognized accrediting association?
- What are the admissions requirements for the college or for a specific program?
- How do you apply and which forms do you fill out?
- When are the important deadlines for admissions?
- Will your family's ability to pay for college be a factor in the admissions process?
- What are the housing requirements and parking rules?
- What types of extracurricular activities are available?
- Can credits be earned online or transferred from other colleges?
- What percentage of first-year students return the following year?
- What percentage of graduates are employed within one year?

### Talk with a Financial Aid Counselor

- How much does it cost to attend the college (including tuition, room and board, fees, etc.)?
- What financial aid options are available?
- Does the school participate in federal and state aid programs? (Not all schools are eligible.)
- What percentage of undergraduates receive aid? How much do they receive on average?
- Which financial aid forms do you need to fill out and what are the deadlines?
- Does the college offer scholarships? Who is most likely to receive them? How do you apply?
- Will private/non-government scholarships reduce the amount of need-based aid you receive?
- How is financial aid paid out? When will you receive it?

# College Comparison

College Names	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
<b>Location – contact information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distance from home</li> <li>admission staff contact</li> <li>email/phone number</li> </ul>			
<b>Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>student enrollment</li> <li>physical size of campus</li> </ul>			
<b>Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>type of school (2 yr., 4 yr.)</li> <li>school setting (urban, rural)</li> <li>nearest city</li> <li>co-ed, male, female</li> <li>religious affiliation</li> <li>diversity</li> </ul>			
<b>Admission Requirements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>deadline</li> <li>tests required</li> <li>average test scores, GPA, rank</li> <li>would it be “safety”, “match” or “reach”?</li> </ul>			
<b>Academics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>your major offered</li> <li>special requirements</li> <li>accreditation</li> <li>student-faculty ratio</li> <li>typical class size</li> </ul>			
<b>College Expenses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tuition, room and board</li> <li>estimated cost of attendance</li> <li>application fee, deposits</li> </ul>			
<b>Financial Aid</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>deadline</li> <li>required forms</li> <li>% receiving aid</li> <li>scholarships</li> </ul>			
<b>Housing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>residence hall requirement</li> <li>food plan</li> <li>on/off campus</li> </ul>			
<b>Facilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>academic</li> <li>recreational</li> <li>other</li> </ul>			
<b>Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clubs, organizations</li> <li>Greek life</li> <li>athletics, intramurals</li> <li>other</li> </ul>			

## 4

## Session 4: The Application Process (Part 1)

The purpose of this session is to introduce the students to the various parts of a college application and to help them to understand the importance of taking responsibility for the completion of each component. Some high schools help students with the application process more than others, but students must recognize, ultimately, that they are the ones in control. Although not all colleges offer interviews and many students cannot get to campus, the advantages of interviewing are also covered in this session.

### Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- recognize the importance of understanding the college application process at their high schools
- know what they are responsible for submitting to a college and what is sent by the school
- have examined a college application and discussed the specifics of each section
- know how to request teacher recommendations
- have practiced introducing themselves and answering a typical interview question

### Activities and Handouts

#### Activity #1: Setting the Stage

#### Activity #2: The Application

*Handouts:* Parts of a College Application; The Common Application, Coalition Application, or the Universal College Application

#### Activity #3: The Teacher Recommendations

*Handouts:* The Common Application Teacher Evaluation; Who Will Write Your Recommendation?; Teacher Recommendation Request Form

#### Activity #4: Interviews

*Handout:* Typical College Interview Questions

4

Session 4: The Application Process (Part I)

## Activity #1: Setting the Stage

### Opening Discussion

In this activity, students will be learning all they ever wanted to know about a college application. It is important to emphasize the critical role of the high school in the college application process—in providing students with information and forms, writing recommendations, submitting transcripts, and meeting deadlines. It is critical that students know where in their school to go for help.

### Questions to Ask

1. Does your school have counselors? If so, tell me about yours. How often have you had a chance to meet with him or her? Do you think your counselor knows you very well?
2. If there are no counselors, who at your school is responsible for helping students with college applications? (It could be an administrator, a career center director, volunteers, etc.) Where are their offices located?
3. How do students at your school request transcripts? Counselor recommendations? Are there any fees associated with these requests? Any forms? Any deadlines? Are students supposed to supply envelopes and stamps?

*To close the discussion, list on the board or on chart paper some concrete suggestions for locating this information and becoming better acquainted with the counselor.*

## 4

## Session 4: The Application Process (Part I)

## Activity #2: The Application

### Opening Discussion

Completing an application can be daunting, but when looked at piece by piece, it can become a manageable process. It is important for students to be in charge of their college applications: making decisions and doing the work and knowing who to turn to for help.

### Activity/Handout

#### Parts of a College Application

##### The Common Application

##### The Common Application School Report, Mid Year Report, Final Report, and Counselor Recommendation

**\*Consider showing examples from the Universal College Application ([www.universalcollegeapp.com](http://www.universalcollegeapp.com)) and the Coalition Application ([www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org))**

### Instruction

1. Give each student The Common Application, the Universal College Application, or the Coalition Application and the “Parts of a College Application” sheet.
2. Emphasize the **Important Things to Remember** bullets at the beginning of the sheet.
3. Using the sheet and the sample application, go through the application, section by section. Most likely, there won't be time for students to complete the application at this time, but respond to any questions they might have so they can do so later, at home. *Emphasize that it is valuable to do a draft application before submitting a “final” one.*
4. Ask students to look at the extracurricular activities section. Point out that when they completed the “College Counseling Résumé” in Session 1, they compiled most of the information necessary for this section. Students will need to put that information in the format required by each individual application. Emphasize that there are no “good” or “bad” activities—this section provides an opportunity to demonstrate how they have spent their time outside of class. *Note: Some applications allow students to send a résumé or additional list of activities as a supplement to this section.*
5. Ask students to look at the **Secondary School Report Form and the Counselor Recommendation Form**. Explain that these are the types of forms that someone at the school, probably their counselor, will complete and send with the transcript. Ask them what surprises them about these forms. Again, ask students about their relationship with their counselor. What is the policy at their school for requesting counselor recommendations?
6. Ask students to look at the **Mid Year Report Form**. Explain that this is sent after the fall semester of their senior year. Explain to them that changes in their senior year curriculum must be reported to colleges. Tell students to look at the **Final Report Form**. Remind them that they don't get to coast during their last semester of high school. Colleges require final transcripts and sometimes a final report form. Acceptances can be rescinded due to poor academic performance during senior year. Senior year matters!

## Parts of a College Application

### *What Could Be Included*

**Official Transcript:** Your transcript is the record of all the courses you have taken for high school credit, your grades, and credits earned. Other information that might be included on a transcript: GPA, class rank, standardized test scores, courses in progress. This is normally sent directly from your high school to the college.

**Standardized Test Scores:** The majority of colleges require one of the two admission tests, the SAT or the ACT. They could also require results from SAT Subject Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, and the TOEFL. Many colleges and universities give applicants the option of reporting scores from either of the two testing programs. Students should weigh the advantages of taking both or either test. Retakes may be needed in the senior year, because students don't always receive their highest score from their first testing. For students who meet low-income standards, testing fee waivers are available.

**The Application Form:** The student is responsible for locating the application, completing it, and submitting it by the college deadline (by mail or online). Many colleges accept standardized college applications, such as the Coalition Application, The Common Application, or the Universal Application. These are important components:

- Personal and Educational Data (i.e., name, address, phone number, email, citizenship; and residency information; high schools you have attended; college credits you have earned, parental information; senior year schedule; and standardized test scores)
- Honors and Awards
- Extracurricular, Personal, and Volunteer Activities
- Employment, Internships, and Summer Activities (some colleges allow you to submit a résumé in addition to the activity section of their application)
- Essays, short answer and/or a longer personal essay
- Disciplinary information
- Application Fee (many colleges will accept fee waivers which can be obtained from the counseling office)
- Signature
- For certain majors, students may be required to audition or asked to submit a portfolio of artistic work

**Secondary School Report Form or Counselor Recommendation Form:** This isn't required by all colleges but, if it is required, the high school is responsible for submitting this form to the college. However, you will need to request that it be sent. It is important to know and follow your school's procedures.

**Midyear Report Form:** This form isn't required by all colleges but, if it is required, it will be submitted by your high school. However, you must request that it be sent. The purpose of the form is for the college to see your grades from the first term of your senior year.

**Final Report Form:** This form isn't required by all colleges. If this form is required, it will be submitted by your high school. However, you must request that it be sent. The purpose of this form is to inform the college of any grade changes, course changes, and/or disciplinary actions since the Midyear Report.

**Teacher Recommendation Form:** Not required by all colleges, but the teacher or college counselor is responsible for sending this form. However, you are responsible for asking a teacher to complete it and giving that teacher all the necessary information. Colleges aren't only looking for teachers from courses where you have received an A, but from teachers who can talk about your work ethic, inquisitive nature, and motivation to learn.

*If in doubt, consult your counselor or call the college admission office to confirm application requirements.*



THE COMMON APPLICATION

FIRST-YEAR APPLICATION

APPLICANT

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name exactly as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Preferred name, if not first name (only one) \_\_\_\_\_ Former last name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Sex assigned at birth  Male  Female  
mm/dd/yyyy

If you would like the opportunity, we invite you to share more about your gender identity \_\_\_\_\_

US Social Security Number, if any \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Required for US Citizens and Permanent Residents applying for financial aid via FAFSA

Preferred Telephone  Home  Mobile Home (\_\_\_\_\_) Mobile (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code Area/Country/City Code

Permanent home address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment #

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ County or Parish \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

If different from above, please give your current mailing address for all admission correspondence. (from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_)  
(mm/dd/yyyy) (mm/dd/yyyy)

Current mailing address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment #

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ County or Parish \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

If your current mailing address is a boarding school, include name of school here: \_\_\_\_\_

FUTURE PLANS

Your answers to these questions will vary for different colleges. If the online system did not ask you to answer some of the questions you see in this section, this college chose not to ask that question of its applicants.

College \_\_\_\_\_ Deadline \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Entry Term:  Fall (Jul-Dec)  Spring (Jan-Jun)

Decision Plan \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Interests \_\_\_\_\_

Career Interest \_\_\_\_\_

Do you intend to apply for need-based financial aid?  Yes  No

Do you intend to apply for merit-based scholarships?  Yes  No

Do you intend to be a full-time student?  Yes  No

Do you intend to enroll in a degree program your first year?  Yes  No

Do you intend to live in college housing? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the highest degree you intend to earn? \_\_\_\_\_

DEMOGRAPHICS

Citizenship Status \_\_\_\_\_

Non-US Citizenship(s) \_\_\_\_\_

US Visa Status \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_  
City/Town State/Province Country

Years lived in the US? \_\_\_\_\_ Years lived outside the US? \_\_\_\_\_

Language Proficiency (Check all that apply.)  
S(Speak) R(Read) W(Write) F(First Language) H(Spoken at Home)

	S	R	W	F	H
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Optional** The items with a gray background are optional. No information you provide will be used in a discriminatory manner.

Religious Preference \_\_\_\_\_

US Armed Services veteran status \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you Hispanic/Latino?  
 Yes, Hispanic or Latino (including Spain)  No If yes, please describe your background. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (Check one or more and describe your background.)

American Indian or Alaska Native (including all Original Peoples of the Americas)  
 Are you Enrolled?  Yes  No If yes, please enter Tribal Enrollment Number \_\_\_\_\_

Asian (including Indian subcontinent and Philippines) \_\_\_\_\_

Black or African American (including Africa and Caribbean) \_\_\_\_\_

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Original Peoples) \_\_\_\_\_

White (including Middle Eastern) \_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY**

Please list both parents below, even if one or more is deceased or no longer has legal responsibilities toward you. Many colleges collect this information for demographic purposes even if you are an adult or an emancipated minor. If you are a minor with a legal guardian (an individual or government entity), then please list that information below as well. If you wish, you may list step-parents and/or other adults with whom you reside, or who otherwise care for you, in the Additional Information section.

**Household**

Parents' marital status (relative to each other):  Never Married  Married  Civil Union/Domestic Partners  Widowed  Separated  Divorced (date \_\_\_\_\_) <sup>yyyy</sup>

With whom do you make your permanent home?  Parent 1  Parent 2  Both  Legal Guardian  Ward of the Court/State  Other

If you have children, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent 1**

Mother  Father  I have limited information about this parent

Is Parent 1 living?  Yes  No (Date Deceased \_\_\_\_\_) <sup>mm/yyyy</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur First/Given Middle

Former last name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Country of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Home address **if different** from yours \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Telephone:  Home  Mobile  Work (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (former occupation, if retired) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

College (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate School (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent 2 (optional)**

Mother  Father  I have limited information about this parent

Is Parent 2 living?  Yes  No (Date Deceased \_\_\_\_\_) <sup>mm/yyyy</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur First/Given Middle

Former last name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Country of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Home address **if different** from yours \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Telephone:  Home  Mobile  Work (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (former occupation, if retired) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

College (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate School (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Legal Guardian (if other than a parent)**

Relationship to you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur First/Given Middle

Home address **if different** from yours \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Telephone:  Home  Mobile  Work (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (former occupation, if retired) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

College (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate School (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Siblings**

Please give names and ages of your brothers or sisters. If they are enrolled in grades K-12 (or international equivalent), list their grade levels. If they have attended or are currently attending college, give the names of the undergraduate institution, degree earned, and approximate dates of attendance. If more than three siblings, please list them in the Additional Information section.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Age & Grade Relationship

College Attended \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree earned \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_  
or expected <sup>mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Age & Grade Relationship

College Attended \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree earned \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_  
or expected <sup>mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Age & Grade Relationship

College Attended \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB \_\_\_\_\_

Degree earned \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_  
or expected <sup>mm/yyyy - mm/yyyy</sup>



**EDUCATION**

**Secondary Schools**

Most recent secondary school attended \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Date mm/yyyy Graduation Date mm/yyyy School Type:  Public  Charter  Independent  Religious  Home School

Address \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_  
*Number & Street*

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Title \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
*Area/Country/City Code Number Ext. Area/Country/City Code Number*

List all other secondary schools you have attended since 9<sup>th</sup> grade, including academic summer schools or enrichment programs hosted on a secondary school campus:  
School Name & CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_ Location (City, State/Province, ZIP/Postal Code, Country) \_\_\_\_\_ Dates Attended (mm/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list any community program/organization that has provided free assistance with your application process: \_\_\_\_\_

If your education was or will be interrupted, please indicate so here and provide details in the Additional Information section: \_\_\_\_\_

**Colleges & Universities** List all college/university affiliated courses you have taken since 9th grade and mark all that apply: taught on college campus (CO); taught on high school campus, excluding AP/IB (HS); taught online (ON); college credit awarded (CR); transcript available (TR); degree candidate (DC).

College/University Name & CEEB/ACT Code	Location (City, State/Province, ZIP/Postal Code, Country)	CO	HS	ON	CR	TR	DC	Dates Attended mm/yyyy – mm/yyyy	Degree Earned
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

If you indicated that a transcript is available, please have an official copy sent to your colleges as soon as possible.

**ACADEMICS**

The self-reported information in this section is not intended to take the place of your official records. Please note the requirements of each institution to which you are applying and arrange for official transcripts and score reports to be sent from your secondary school and the appropriate testing agencies. Where "Best Scores" are requested, please report the highest individual scores you have earned so far, even if those scores are from different test dates.

**Grades** Class Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Class Size \_\_\_\_\_ Weighted?  Yes  No GPA \_\_\_\_\_ Scale \_\_\_\_\_ Weighted?  Yes  No  
*(if available) (if available)*

**ACT** Exam Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Scores: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(past & future) mm/dd/yyyy mm/dd/yyyy mm/dd/yyyy (so far) COMP mm/dd/yyyy English mm/dd/yyyy Math mm/dd/yyyy*  
Reading mm/dd/yyyy Science mm/dd/yyyy Writing mm/dd/yyyy

**SAT** Exam Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Scores: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(past & future) mm/dd/yyyy mm/dd/yyyy (so far) Critical Reading/ Evidence-based Reading and Writing mm/dd/yyyy Math mm/dd/yyyy*

**TOEFL/IELTS** Exam Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Score: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(past & future) mm/yyyy mm/yyyy (so far) Test Score mm/yyyy*

**AP/IB/SAT Subjects** Best Scores: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(per subject, so far) mm/yyyy Type & Subject Score mm/yyyy Type & Subject Score*

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**Current Courses** Please list all courses you are taking this year and indicate level (AP, IB, advanced, honors, etc.) and credit value. Indicate quarter classes taken in the same semester on the appropriate semester line.

Full Year/First Semester/First Trimester	Second Semester/Second Trimester	Third Trimester <i>or additional first/second term courses if more space is needed</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Honors** Briefly list any academic distinctions or honors you have received since the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or international equivalent (e.g., National Merit, Cum Laude Society).  
S(School) S/R(State or Regional) N(National) I(International)

Grade level or post-graduate (PG) 9 10 11 12 PG	Honor	Highest Level of Recognition			
		S	S/R	N	I
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Extracurricular** Please list your **principal** extracurricular, volunteer, and work activities **in their order of importance to you**. Feel free to group your activities and paid work experience separately if you prefer. Use the space available to provide details of your activities and accomplishments (specific events, varsity letter, musical instrument, employer, etc.). **To allow us to focus on the highlights of your activities, please complete this section even if you plan to attach a résumé.**

Grade level or post-graduate (PG) 9 10 11 12 PG	Approximate time spent		When did you participate in the activity?		Positions held, honors won, letters earned, or employer	If applicable, do you plan to participate in college?
	Hours per week	Weeks per year	School year	Summer/School Break		
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity _____						

DO NOT MAIL TO COLLEGES

## WRITING

## Personal Essay

**Note:** Some colleges require a personal essay. You may submit a personal essay to any college, even if it is not required by that college.

**Instructions.** The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. *What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores?* Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so.

- 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.
- The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

## Additional Information

Please attach a separate sheet if you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application.

## Disciplinary History

- ① Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at any educational institution you have attended from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action? These actions could include, but are not limited to: probation, suspension, removal, dismissal, or expulsion from the institution.  Yes  No
- ② Have you ever been adjudicated guilty or convicted of a misdemeanor or felony?  Yes  No  
 [Note that you are not required to answer "yes" to this question, or provide an explanation, if the criminal adjudication or conviction has been expunged, sealed, annulled, pardoned, destroyed, erased, impounded, or otherwise required by law or ordered by a court to be kept confidential.]

If you answered "yes" to either or both questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper that gives the approximate date of each incident, explains the circumstances, and reflects on what you learned from the experience.

**Note:** Applicants are expected to immediately notify the institutions to which they are applying should there be any changes to the information requested in this application, including disciplinary history.

## SIGNATURE

**Application Fee Payment** If this college requires an application fee, how will you be paying it?

- Online Payment  Will Mail Payment  Fee Waiver Request

## Required Signature

- I certify that all information submitted in the admission process—including this application and any other supporting materials—is my own work, factually true, and honestly presented, and that these documents will become the property of the institution to which I am applying and will not be returned to me. I understand that I may be subject to a range of possible disciplinary actions, including admission revocation, expulsion, or revocation of course credit, grades, and degree should the information I have certified be false.
- I agree to notify the institutions to which I am applying immediately should there be any change to the information requested in this application, including disciplinary history.
- I understand that once my application has been submitted it may not be altered in any way; I will need to contact the institution directly if I wish to provide additional information.
- I acknowledge that I have reviewed the application instructions for the college receiving this application. I understand that all offers of admission are conditional, pending receipt of final transcripts showing work comparable in quality to that upon which the offer was based, as well as honorable dismissal from the school.
- I affirm that I will send an enrollment deposit (or equivalent) to only one institution; sending multiple deposits (or equivalent) may result in the withdrawal of my admission offers from all institutions. [Note: students may send an enrollment deposit (or equivalent) to a second institution where they have been admitted from the waitlist, provided that they inform the first institution that they will no longer be enrolling.]

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Common Application member institution admission offices do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, marital status, parental status, physical disability, learning disability, political affiliation, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

THE COMMON APPLICATION

SCHOOL REPORT

SR

TO THE APPLICANT

After completing all the relevant questions below, give this form to your secondary school counselor or another school official who knows you better. **If applying via mail**, please also give that school official stamped envelopes addressed to each institution that requires a School Report.

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ CAID (Common App ID) \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_

**Current year courses—please indicate title, level (AP, IB, advanced honors, etc.) and credit value of all courses you are taking this year. Indicate quarter classes taken in the same semester on the appropriate semester line.**

Full Year/First Semester/First Trimester	Second Semester/Second Trimester	Third Trimester <small>or additional first/second term courses if more space is needed</small>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE:** By signing this form, I authorize every school that I have attended to release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also authorize employees at these colleges to confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.

I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

- I have chosen not to waive my right to review my recommendations and supporting documents. I understand that my decision may lead my counselors or teachers to decline to write recommendations on my behalf. I also understand that my decision may lead colleges to disregard any recommendations submitted on my behalf.

I understand that my waiver or no waiver selection above pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my selections cannot be changed after any recommendation or application submission.

Required Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

TO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Attach applicant's official transcript, including courses in progress, a school profile, and transcript legend. (Check transcript copies for readability.) Use both pages to complete your evaluation for this student. **Be sure to sign below before mailing directly to the college/university admission office. Do not mail this form to The Common Application offices.**

Counselor's Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Please print or type

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Title \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School Website Address \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code Number Ext. Area/Country/City Code Number

School CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information**

Class Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Class Size \_\_\_\_\_ Covering a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy)

The rank is  weighted  unweighted. How many additional students share this rank? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you report class rank? quartile \_\_\_\_\_ quintile \_\_\_\_\_ decile \_\_\_\_\_

Cumulative GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ on a \_\_\_\_\_ scale, covering a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy)

This GPA is  weighted  unweighted. The school's passing mark is \_\_\_\_\_

Highest GPA in class \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy)

Percentage of graduating class immediately attending: \_\_\_\_\_ four-year \_\_\_\_\_ two-year institutions

Does your school require students to perform volunteer service?  Yes  No

Is the applicant an Advanced Cambridge (AICE) Diploma Candidate?  Yes  No

How many courses does your school offer:  
 AP \_\_\_\_\_ IB \_\_\_\_\_ Honors \_\_\_\_\_

If school policy limits the number a student may take in a given year, please list the maximum allowed:  
 AP \_\_\_\_\_ IB \_\_\_\_\_ Honors \_\_\_\_\_

Is the applicant an IB Diploma candidate?  Yes  No

Are classes taken on a block schedule?  Yes  No

In comparison with other college preparatory students at your school, the applicant's course selection is:

- less than demanding
- average demanding
- very demanding
- most demanding
- prefer not to respond

**Ratings** Compared to other students in his or her class year, how do you rate this student in terms of:

No basis		Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	Outstanding (top 5%)	One of the top few I've encountered (top 1%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Academic achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extracurricular accomplishments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal qualities and character	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	OVERALL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

① Has the applicant ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at your school from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action? These actions could include, but are not limited to: probation, suspension, removal, dismissal, or expulsion from your institution.  Yes  No  School policy prevents me from responding

② To your knowledge, has the applicant ever been adjudicated guilty or convicted of a misdemeanor or felony?  Yes  No  School policy prevents me from responding.

[Note that you are not required to answer "yes" to this question, or provide an explanation, if the criminal adjudication or conviction has been expunged, sealed, annulled, pardoned, destroyed, erased, impounded, or otherwise ordered to be kept confidential by a court.]

If you answered "yes" to either or both questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper or use your written recommendation to give the approximate date of each incident and explain the circumstances.

Applicants are expected to immediately notify the institutions to which they are applying should there be any changes to the information requested in this application, including disciplinary history.

Check here if you would prefer to discuss this applicant over the phone with each admission office.

I recommend this student:  No basis  With reservation  Fairly strongly  Strongly  Enthusiastically

THE COMMON APPLICATION

MIDYEAR REPORT

MR

TO THE APPLICANT

After completing the information in this section, give this form to your school counselor or another school official who knows you better. **If applying via mail**, please also give that school official stamped envelopes addressed to each institution to which you have applied.

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ CAID (Common App ID) \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTE:** The original School Report submitted on your behalf reflects your choice to waive or not waive your right of access to all recommendations and supporting documents. That response applies to all subsequent reports, including this one. You chose the following:

- I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.
- I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

TO THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Please submit this form when midyear grades are available (end of first semester or second trimester). Attach applicant's official transcript, including courses in progress and transcript legend. (Please check transcript copies for readability.) **Be sure to sign below before mailing directly to the college/university admission office. Do not mail this form to The Common Application offices.**

Counselor's Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Please print name

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Title \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School Website Address \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code Number Ext. Area/Country/City Code Number

School CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information** If any of the information below has changed for this student since the School Report was submitted, please enter the new information in the appropriate section below.

Class Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Class Size \_\_\_\_\_ Covering a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Cumulative GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ on a \_\_\_\_\_ scale, covering a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy)

The rank is  weighted  unweighted. This GPA is  weighted  unweighted. The school's passing mark is \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many additional students share this rank? \_\_\_\_\_ Highest GPA in class \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy)

We do not rank. Instead, please indicate quartile \_\_\_\_\_ quintile \_\_\_\_\_ decile \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy)

Have there been any changes to the senior year courses listed on the original School Report?  Yes  No

Have there been any changes in the applicant's disciplinary status at your school since you submitted the original School Report?  
 Yes  No  School policy prevents me from responding

To your knowledge, have there been any changes to the applicant's criminal history since you submitted the original School Report?  
 Yes  No  School policy prevents me from responding

Do you wish to update your original evaluation of this applicant?  Yes  No

**If you responded yes to any of the preceding questions, please attach an explanation.**  
 Check here if you would prefer to discuss this applicant over the phone with each admission office.



THE COMMON APPLICATION

FINAL REPORT

FR

TO THE APPLICANT

After completing the information in this section, give this form to your school counselor or another school official who knows you better. **If applying via mail**, please also give that school official stamped envelopes addressed to all institutions requesting a final transcript.

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ CAID (Common App ID) \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTE:** The original School Report submitted on your behalf reflects your choice to waive or not waive your right of access to all recommendations and supporting documents. That response applies to all subsequent reports, including this one. You chose the following:

I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.

TO THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Please submit this form when final grades are available (end of second semester or third trimester). Attach applicant's official transcript and transcript legend. (Please check transcript copies for readability.) **Be sure to sign below before mailing directly to the college/university admission office. Do not mail this form to The Common Application offices.**

Counselor's Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Please print or type

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Title \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School Website Address \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code Number Ext. Area/Country/City Code Number

School CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information** If any of the information below has changed for this student since the Midyear Report was submitted, please enter the new information in the appropriate section below. **(Counselors of transfer applicants need not answer the questions below the shaded box.)**

Class Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Class Size \_\_\_\_\_ Covering a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Cumulative GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ on a \_\_\_\_\_ scale, covering a period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy) (mm/yyyy)

The rank is  weighted  unweighted. This GPA is  weighted  unweighted. The school's passing mark is \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many additional students share this rank? \_\_\_\_\_ Highest GPA in class \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy)

We do not rank. Instead, please indicate quartile \_\_\_\_\_ quintile \_\_\_\_\_ decile \_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/yyyy)

Have there been any changes to the senior year courses listed on the original School Report?  Yes  No

Have there been any changes in the applicant's disciplinary status at your school since you submitted the original School Report?  
 Yes  No  School policy prevents me from responding

To your knowledge, have there been any changes to the applicant's criminal history since you submitted the original School Report?  
 Yes  No  School policy prevents me from responding

Do you wish to update your original evaluation of this applicant?  Yes  No

**If you responded yes to any of the preceding questions, please attach an explanation.**

Check here if you would prefer to discuss this applicant over the phone with each admission office.

THE COMMON APPLICATION

COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION CR

TO THE APPLICANT

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ CAID (Common App ID) \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_

TO THE COUNSELOR

Counselor's Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Please print or type

Title \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School Website Address \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's Fax (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code Number Ext. Area/Country/City Code Number

School CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation

How long have you known this student and in what context? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the first words that come to your mind to describe this student? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments

Please provide comments that will help us differentiate this student from others. We especially welcome a broad-based assessment and encourage you to consider describing or addressing:

- The applicant's academic, extracurricular, and personal characteristics.
- Relevant context for the applicant's performance and involvement, such as particularities of family situation or after-school obligations, either positive or negative.
- Observed problematic behaviors, perhaps separable from academic performance, that an admission committee should explore further.

Counselor evaluations often provide invaluable context to a student's application. We recognize, however, that you may not be able to provide one. If you will not be providing a personal written evaluation, please check the box below to inform our member institutions that you will not supply a written evaluation. Note you may substitute another school official's evaluation in place of one from you personally.

I will not be sending an evaluation for this student.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Please mail this form and accompanying documents directly to each college/university admission office. Do not mail this form to The Common Application offices.

## 4

## Session 4: The Application Process (Part I)

## Activity #3: Teacher Recommendations

### Opening Discussion

Students need to know they have some control over their teacher recommendations, especially as it relates to who they ask, how far ahead of time they ask, and the kinds of information they provide the teacher. The role play will provide practice that should help build the student's confidence in approaching a teacher.

### Activities/Handouts

#### **The Common Application Teacher Evaluation**

#### **Who Will Write Your Recommendation?**

#### **Teacher Recommendation Request Form**

### Instructions

1. Give each student the three handouts.
2. Ask students what surprises them about The Common Application Teacher Evaluation. Consider showing examples from the Universal College Application ([www.universalcollegeapp.com](http://www.universalcollegeapp.com)) and the Coalition Application ([www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)). Stress that, in essence, a teacher recommendation should answer: Why would a professor want to teach this student?
3. Ask students to identify at least two teachers whom they could confidently ask to write a recommendation—they should write the names on the “Who Will Write Your Recommendation?” sheet.
4. Some high schools have a specific procedure for requesting teacher recommendations. If yours doesn't, teachers can use the Teacher Recommendation Request form. If a college doesn't ask for a teacher recommendation, it may be because they don't want additional information. However, if a student is deferred, a strong letter of recommendation can be sent.
5. *Students cannot ask to see teacher recommendations, but they are able to help shape them by giving the teacher good information.*
6. **Role-Play:** Ask students to turn to the handout, “Who Will Write Your Recommendation?” and the “Teacher Recommendation.” Allow a few minutes to read those handouts and then pair students and ask them to practice asking a teacher for a recommendation. Ask some groups to demonstrate to the entire class.

THE COMMON APPLICATION

TEACHER EVALUATION

TE

TO THE APPLICANT

After completing all the relevant questions below, give this form to a teacher who has taught you an **academic** subject (for example, English, foreign language, math, science, or social studies). **If applying via mail**, please also give that teacher stamped envelopes addressed to each institution that requires a Teacher Evaluation.

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name **exactly** as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ CAID (Common App ID) \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street Apartment # City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

School you now attend \_\_\_\_\_ CEEB/ACT Code \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE:** By signing this form, I authorize every school that I have attended to release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also authorize employees at these colleges to confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.

- I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.
- I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.
  - I have chosen not to waive my right to review my recommendations and supporting documents. I understand that my decision may lead my counselors or teachers to decline to write recommendations on my behalf. I also understand that my decision may lead colleges to disregard any recommendations submitted on my behalf.

I understand that my waiver or no waiver selection above pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my selections cannot be changed after any recommendation or application submission.

Required Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

TO THE TEACHER

The Common Application membership finds candid evaluations helpful in choosing from among highly qualified candidates. You are encouraged to keep this form in your private files for use should the student need additional recommendations. Please submit your references promptly, **and remember to sign below before mailing directly to the college/university admission office. Do not mail this form to The Common Application offices.**

Teacher's Name (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_ Subject Taught \_\_\_\_\_  
Please print or type

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
mm/dd/yyyy

Secondary School \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Number & Street City/Town State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

Teacher's Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Country/City Code Number Ext.

Background Information

How long have you known this student and in what context? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the first words that come to your mind to describe this student? \_\_\_\_\_

In which grade level(s) was the student enrolled when you taught him/her?  9  10  11  12  Other \_\_\_\_\_

List the courses in which you have taught this student, including the level of course difficulty (AP, IB, accelerated, honors, elective; 100-level, 200-level; etc.).

\_\_\_\_\_

**Ratings** Compared to other students in his or her class year, how do you rate this student in terms of:

No basis		Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	Outstanding (top 5%)	One of the top few I've encountered (top 1%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Academic achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intellectual promise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creative, original thought	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Productive class discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Respect accorded by faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Disciplined work habits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maturity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reaction to setbacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Concern for others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Initiative, independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	OVERALL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Evaluation** Please write whatever you think is important about this student, including a description of academic and personal characteristics, as demonstrated in your classroom. We welcome information that will help us to differentiate this student from others. (Feel free to attach an additional sheet or another reference you may have prepared on behalf of this student.)

SAMPLE APPLICATION  
DO NOT MAIL TO COLLEGES

## Who Will Write Your Recommendations?

- The first step is to make sure that your colleges require teacher recommendations. You do this by carefully reading the applications.
- If recommendations are required, make sure that you have the forms the colleges require and that *you know the deadline dates*. Address and stamp an envelope for each college that requires a paper version of the teacher recommendation. If the recommendation is submitted electronically, make sure you know the procedures. You will need to input the recommender's email address.
- Find out if your school has a specific policy regarding teacher recommendations. If there is a policy, follow it. If not, you can use the information in this handout.
- The next step is deciding what teacher (or teachers, if your colleges require more than one) to ask.
- Think of the high school teachers who know you best and would be enthusiastic about writing a recommendation for you.
  - o These teachers should be from academic subjects, preferably from junior or senior year.
  - o Teachers whom you have had for more than one class are often good choices.
  - o List the teachers to ask: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Approach the teacher at least three or four weeks before the deadline. You can say something like this: "I am applying to College XYZ, and that college requires a teacher recommendation. I think you know a lot about my strengths as a student. Would you be able to write a recommendation for me?"
- If the teacher agrees, discuss the process your school uses for requesting recommendations. Again, they need at least three weeks notice!
- If the teacher isn't sure or says no, don't push it. Ask a different teacher.
- Write thank-you notes to the teachers who provided recommendations.

## Teacher Recommendation Request

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address / Phone # (in case of questions) \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Course(s) with This Teacher (i.e., English 3): \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you so much for agreeing to write this letter of recommendation for me. I asked you because I think you are a teacher who knows me well and who can accurately evaluate my potential for academic success in college. This information may be helpful to you as you write the recommendation.**

1. I think my academic strengths are...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. I think my personal strengths are...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

3. I am considering the following college majors because...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Some of the things I want the college admission/scholarship committee to know about me...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The specific things I hope you discuss in this letter...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

6. What I remember most about your class...

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Additional information that might be helpful...

(Students: You may attach a résumé to this form if you wish. But remember that the teacher recommendation will focus on you **as a student in this teacher's classroom.**)

These are the schools I am applying to. I have attached any teacher recommendation forms they require, as well as stamped and addressed envelopes.

Name and address of school or email address of admission office

**Again, thank you. I know this is a big time commitment, and I appreciate your help.**

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## 4

## Session 4: The Application Process (Part I)

## Activity #4: Interviews

### *Opening Discussion*

Interviews are seldom required. Exceptions include a few highly selective institutions, as well as some scholarship programs. However, a student should take advantage of the opportunity to interview on or off campus if possible. Students should know that meeting an admission representative “face-to-face,” whether in an informal interview or at a meeting at their school or a college fair, can be helpful in the admission process. Students with special needs or with complicated family situations should be encouraged to make personal contact with an admission officer from the colleges to which they plan to apply. Making a good first impression is important. In this session, students find that role-playing allows them to make and correct mistakes in a practice situation.

### *Activity/Handout*

#### **Typical College Interview Questions**

### *Instructions*

1. Give students a copy of “Typical College Interview Questions.”
2. Ask students to circle at least two questions they are prepared to answer.
3. Demonstrate an introduction: Firm handshake, good eye contact, introducing yourself.
4. Ask students to work with a partner. One is the interviewer, one the student. The student should introduce himself or herself. Then the interviewer should ask a question (one of the ones their partner circled), to which the student responds.
5. Instruct students to switch roles.
6. As a large group, ask the students to make comments about what was effective in the interview exercise and a student volunteer can write the responses on a flipchart or board.

## Typical College Interview Questions

If you have the opportunity for an interview with a college admission representative, take advantage of it. This is a chance for you to answer questions about yourself—your interests and accomplishments, your future goals, your reasons for applying to College XYZ, etc. It is also a great opportunity for you to ask questions. Remember, you are trying to decide if this college is a good fit for you.

### *Typical Questions:*

- Tell us about yourself. What are your favorite classes? What do you want to study in college?
- What are the extracurricular activities you have been most involved with during high school? What were your contributions?
- What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses? Your greatest accomplishments? How would your friends describe you?
- Why are you considering our college? What special programs are you interested in?
- What characteristics are you looking for in the college you will attend?
- Is there anything else you want us to know about you?
- Do you have any questions?

This last question is important—be prepared. Get specific information about the things that interest you most *and* show the interviewer you have done your research.

### *Consider Asking About:*

- The admission process at that school
- Specific majors you are interested in
- Special programs, such as freshman seminars, study abroad, etc.
- Social life—clubs and organizations, sororities and fraternities
- Dorm Life—types of housing, food
- Participation in activities such as music, drama, athletics, community service—who participates? How?
- School traditions.

**Be yourself!**

# 5

## Session 5: The Application Process (Part 2)

Making the final decision about where to apply can be stressful. Students will come away from this session with knowledge of terms, as well as practices and processes required for the completion of college applications, including how to write a college essay.

### *Objectives*

By the end of this session, students will:

- understand that the college application process is challenging, but shouldn't be feared
- understand that attention to detail is necessary
- have set an individualized game plan for the college application process
- have outlined a possible college essay.

### *Activities/Handouts*

#### **Activity #1: Managing Expectations**

*Handouts:* Different Admission Plans; College Application Tracking; Criteria Chart and/or College Comparison sheet from Session 3

#### **Activity #2: The College Essay**

*Handouts:* The College Essay: Getting Started; NACAC's Top 10 Tips for a College Essay; The Common Application, the Universal Application, or the Coalition Application essay topics; Sample College Essays to Evaluate

## 5

## Session 5: The Application Process (Part 2)

# Activity #1: Managing Expectations

## *Opening Discussion*

Students should know why they are applying to each of their colleges. When students narrow their college lists, they should keep a record of each college's admission requirements and deadlines. They should develop a realistic and practical plan for completing applications that can be adjusted. Students may also want to consider applying to their top choices through early plans, if offered.

## *Activities/Handouts*

### **Different Admission Plans**

### **College Application Tracking**

### **Criteria Chart and/or the College Comparison sheet from Session 3**

## *Instructions*

1. Hand out "Different Admission Plans" and discuss the different options, emphasizing pros and cons of each. Remind students that it is important to consider the financial implications of applying Early Decision: Would they be better served if they waited to receive several financial aid offers?
2. Ask the students to look at the "College Application Tracking" chart and begin filling it out to the best of their ability at this point. Completing this chart will be an ongoing process as students determine exactly where they are applying.
3. Point out to students that some colleges track "demonstrated interest." It is beneficial for the student to correspond with the admission office through an occasional email, to try to attend a local college fair if the college of interest is there, and to let the college know if they visit. "Demonstrated Interest" is important to a college because it indicates how serious the student might be about attending that institution.

## Different Admission Plans

There are two main categories of admission options: **non-restrictive** and **restrictive**.

Non-restrictive application plans don't restrict students from applying to other institutions. You'll have until May 1 to consider your options and confirm enrollment. There are three application plans under non-restrictive:

- Regular Decision
- Rolling Admission
- Early Action.

**Regular Decision** means that you turn in your application by the college's deadline and they let you know by a specified date.

For **Rolling Admission**, schools review applications as they're submitted and make decisions throughout the admission cycle (usually within four to six weeks of submission of the application). It is usually wise to send your application as soon as possible since some colleges fill their classes by early winter.

With **Early Action**, you send your application by the early deadline and the college sends you its decision earlier. Some colleges do have additional restrictions on their early action programs, so make sure to read carefully the instructions from each college.

There are two types of restrictive application plans:

- Early Decision
- Restrictive Early Action.

When you decide to apply **Early Decision**, you are committing yourself to going to that school. Early Decision is for those early-bird students who already have a clear first-choice college. If you're still comparing colleges and don't want to limit your choices yet, Early Decision isn't for you. Why? Early Decision is a contract between you and the college. You agree that if the college accepts you, you'll withdraw all other college applications and attend the early decision college. Because of this commitment, you can apply Early Decision to only one college.

The other restrictive option is **Restrictive Early Action**. This means that you apply to your school of choice and get a decision early. Be aware, though, that some schools restrict applicants from applying to any other early plans at other schools. If you go this way, you'll have until May 1 to confirm that you'll attend.

These early options can be confusing—some schools even have more than one of these options—so talk to your school counselor if there's anything you don't understand.

Colleges respond to early applications in one of three ways: acceptance, rejection, or deferring applications over to regular decision.

### *Are You Ready to Commit?*

If several of your classmates are working on Early Decision applications, you may feel some pressure to do the same. But resist the temptation to apply Early Decision unless you truly are ready to commit to one college.

The only way you can be 100 percent sure is if you've done the work that leads to a good decision. Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I thoroughly researched this college and other colleges that may interest me?
- Have I visited this college while classes are in session and met with someone at the admission office?
- Have I explored my academic, extracurricular, and social options at this college?
- Have I talked to a financial aid officer to get an estimate of college costs and to find out how Early Decision could affect my aid package?
- Have I discussed this decision with my family and/or school counselor?
- Is this a true first choice or are there other colleges that still interest me?

If you're at all unsure about your first choice, applying Early Action (which doesn't require a commitment and allows you to apply to other schools), Rolling Admission, or Regular Decision are your best options. There is no need to limit your college choices this early, unless you truly want to.

### *Do Early Application Plans Affect Financial Aid?*

If you need financial aid, you'll probably need to complete a CSS Profile or the college's institutional form at about the same time as the early decision application. The college financial aid office can then send you a tentative financial aid package (tentative until you can send the college your tax return and other supporting documentation). Each college does this a little differently, so check with the financial aid office or admission office of the college to be certain of their procedures.

### *Advantage to Applying Early?*

Many students make an effort to apply through one of the early application programs because they hope to beat the competition of regular decision. Although most colleges have a smaller number of applications in their early programs, whether it's easier to get accepted early than later depends on each college's policy.

One factor to consider is whether your academic record will be stronger later in your senior year. If you had stellar junior-year grades, this may not be a concern. But if you think that your application would be stronger with the addition of your grades for the fall of your senior year, waiting for regular decision may be the way to go.

A possible advantage to applying early, especially Early Action, is that you receive admission decisions early. If you're accepted to one or several colleges, you may feel a bit less stress about the rest of the college admission process. (And if you're accepted Early Decision, your college search is over). If your application is declined at one or more colleges, you have some time to reassess your college choices, if necessary. Colleges can also neither accept nor reject, but rather hold over your application to regular decision. If this happens, make sure to send updated information in time for the regular decision deadline (such as senior-year grades and activities) to bolster your application.

In the end, the decision of whether or not to apply Early Decision or Early Action is yours alone. Do your research, think about your options, look at your fall schedule, and talk to your school counselor and family. Then decide for yourself.

# College Application Tracking

College	Deadline	Transcript sent	Test scores sent	Recommendations sent	Financial aid forms submitted	Application submitted



## 5

## Session 5: The Application Process (Part 2)

## Activity #2: The College Essay

### Opening Discussion

The college essay stands as the last major application hurdle for many students. They may complete everything else, but the essay seems to be waiting for a stroke of divination. This activity is designed to help students kick-start their essays. It is very important to have them fill out as much as possible in the session. The goal is for students to see the essay as an opportunity, not a chore. Having them pre-write gets them started in a concrete way.

### Handouts

**The College Essay: Getting Started****NACAC's Top 10 Tips for Writing a College Essay****The Common Application, Universal College Application, or Coalition Application essay topics (visit websites to obtain this information)****Sample Essays to Evaluate**

### Instructions

1. Give each student a copy of "The College Essay: Getting Started" and give them a few minutes to complete the first two questions. Instruct them to wait until you say so to complete the third question and give them 20 minutes to complete it.
2. Read with them "NACAC's Top 10 Tips for Writing a College Essay", answering any questions as you go over the tips. For more information, see [www.nacacfacts.org/EssayTips](http://www.nacacfacts.org/EssayTips).
3. Research recent application topics. Ask students which topic they would probably choose to write about. If they are already writing about other topics, list some of them on the board.
4. Stress that whatever the essay topic is, their purpose is to tell the admission committee something important about who they are.
5. As a large group, discuss their responses to "The College Essay: Getting Started." Additional resources for essays can be found at [www.collegeboard.org/student](http://www.collegeboard.org/student).
6. Assign students to small groups of three or four and have each group read and discuss a different sample essay. Give each group a sheet of flipchart paper and have them record things they do and don't like about the sample essay. Have the small groups report to the whole group.

## The College Essay: Getting Started

### College Board's Recipe for a Draft: How to Kick-Start Your College Essay

(View additional resources at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays>).

- Think about yourself. What are your best qualities? List several of them here: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Choose one of the qualities you listed above, one you'd like to convey to the college admission committee. Complete this sentence: "I am a very \_\_\_\_\_ person."
- Set a timer for about 20 minutes. Pretend you're taking an exam at school and responding to this prompt: *Tell a story about an experience or time when you showed you were a very \_\_\_\_\_ person (using the characteristic identified above).* Write non-stop for the designated time.
- Congratulations! You have started a draft of a college application essay.

## NACAC's Top 10 Tips for Writing a College Essay

Read a more detailed discussion of each tip at [www.nacacfacts.org/EssayTips](http://www.nacacfacts.org/EssayTips).

1. **Start early.** The more time you have, the less stress you'll have.
2. **Be yourself.** One of the biggest mistakes students make is "writing what they think others want to hear."
3. **Be honest.** College admission officers have read hundreds—even thousands—of essays. They are masters at discovering any form of plagiarism.
4. **Take a risk.** Don't settle for the essay that everyone else is writing.
5. **Keep in focus.** Use the essay to help the admission officers get to know you as a person.
6. **Write and rewrite.** Don't try to write a masterpiece on your first try.
7. **Get a second opinion.** Even best-selling novelists ask other people to read their manuscripts before they're sent to the publisher.
8. **Proofread.**
9. **Don't confuse applying online with sending email.** Make sure that you put as much effort into an online essay as you would if you were sending it snail mail.
10. **Don't expect too much from an essay.** The application essay is important, but it's not the only thing that is considered.

## Sample Essays to Evaluate

Below are essays written in response to long and short essay topics. Read each essay once and evaluate whether it is effective. These are actual essays written by applicants applying to a major state university.

### *Essay #1—Describe a person who has had a significant influence on your life.*

The person who has had the biggest influence on my life would be my twirling coach, Nicole. Not only is she a coach, but a friend and a role model.

Although some days at practice can be absolutely dreadful, I know that she only screams and pushes to make us better and I love that about her. Not only is she there for us as a coach, but also as a friend as well. Whenever someone has a rough day, she is the perfect person to talk to. She seems to have the answers to almost everything. She often sits us down as a team and has talks about being the better person in an argument, being a good leader, and most of all, being a good person.

Not a day goes by that I don't think about something that Nicole has taught me. Whether it is getting in a petty fight over nothing or just wanting to be lazy and not pick up by baton for an hour's practice, I often think, Nicole wouldn't be happy with my decision, or Nicole wouldn't do that. She seems to indirectly alter some of the decisions I make, which I believe are standards for a great role model.

If I would have never met my twirling coach, I don't know where I'd be today. So many of my decisions I make are influenced by things she says and her actions. She definitely has had a great amount of influence upon my life as a coach, a friend, and a role model.

### *Essays # 2 and #3 (same short answer topic; essays by two different students): If you were to work with a professor to design and help teach a class, what topic would you choose and why?*

#### **Essay #2:**

Like many young adults, I am constantly on the run trying to get to the next activity I have scheduled. The day never seems long enough, and there is always something left undone. School, for example, is a source of a lot of stress and anxiety. I often find myself getting distracted thinking about the Calculus test or the English paper, long after they have passed.

A year ago I went to a meditation retreat in the Catskill Mountains. Since then, I have been regularly practicing meditation, an ancient yoga practice independent of all religions. However, every religion utilizes the value of meditation in one form or another to achieve eternal bliss and peace of mind.

Although I am somewhat of a "beginner," I have already witnessed many benefits. I have found I am able to concentrate better and have an increased immunity to distractions. I find meditating helps to relieve much of my tension and enables me to work with much more zeal. Many nights I have to study for multiple tests or quizzes, so I meditate a few minutes before I start each new subject. Once I have done this, my mind is clearer and more responsive to the information it is fed.

At college, I would like to share the wonder of meditation with others to help them get through the tough times. The message of meditation transcends religious lines and can be beneficial to everyone. Working with more accomplished individuals, I would like to explore the therapeutic aspect of the practice; and, perhaps through statistical, historical, and spiritual data, support this ideology. The opportunity to work with a professor would help me structure and deliver the message better. Guest speakers as part of a club or college course would enhance the experience of meditation. I believe this course would be a great learning experience and benefit for interested students.

**Essay #3:**

If I were to work with a professor to design and teach a class, the topic for my new course would be a broad study of major modern day religions as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Through education this class's objective would hopefully be to curb prejudice and increase tolerance of other religions. I feel that especially now during this time of crisis in our nation that to toleration can only further expound on the unity we now possess.

*Essay #4: Describe the environment in which you grew up and how it has shaped your personal goals.*

I grew up in a brick house on Nottingham Drive, a place with old furniture and young faces, with small rooms that never seemed empty. I grew up with my pointy nose buried in books, wearing stretch pants and bows and listening to my father's new songs on the guitar. I sat at a dinner table as girlish voices made fun of that pointy nose along with my big ears, and I finally learned to laugh about them. I grew up with a big-nosed father who always had a joke on his tongue and a mother who always had an answer. I heard that as long as I worked hard enough, I could do anything.

I grew up eating fresh tomatoes from my grandpa's garden and later saw that same garden overrun with weeds. I grew up during summers at the lake, with cousins who couldn't read until fourth grade and could break every object in sight. I watched at a distance as relatives struggled through life, searching for paths to independence. I heard stories from the adults' fold-out table, of women abandoned by the men whom they had depended on. Somewhere amongst those stories, I made up my mind not to make their same mistakes.

I grew up with a determination to make something of myself, to stand apart from the crowd. I listened to seemingly endless stories about the Depression, wars, and old friends. I wondered if I would ever get a chance to tell my stories. I wondered what type of stories I would have to tell.

I began to understand that I have a choice. I can choose the stories that I want to tell. I can choose whether or not I repeat others' mistakes. And I can choose what I make of myself. As to how I make these choices, I'm sure that all I have to do is remember the stories from when I grew up.

## Admission Counselors' Critiques of Essays

### *Essay #1*

This essay doesn't work because it lacks depth. The writer just skims the surface and gives the reader vague details about the coach. The writing also lacks sophistication. The word choice and sentence structure are very simplistic.

### *Essay #2*

This is a good short answer response because it is a very specific topic and shares a personal experience. The writer uses clear details and writes well. This brief answer response also shows that the writer is open minded, curious, and motivated to work with others.

### *Essay #3*

Even though this is a short answer response, the writer needed to go into more depth. The topic is too broad as presented and doesn't allow the writer to talk about the details. The writer also didn't proofread carefully; there are words missing and other grammatical errors.

### *Essay #4*

This essay is an excellent example of how concrete details can create a vivid story. The writer's strong observation skills and sensitivity to her family hold the reader's attention. Her reflections at the end are well supported by the story. The writer uses language well and shows a sense of style.

## 6

## Session 6: Financial Aid

For most students, an application isn't complete without considering finances, so the primary goal of this session is to provide information to students and parents/families about the financial aid process. Since this is the final session, allow time at the end for the final wrap-up which will be the "Great Sorting Game" followed by a discussion and final evaluation.

### Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- have a better understanding of the components of financial aid
- know what questions to ask as they move through the financial aid process.

### Activities/Handouts

**Activity #1: Understanding Financial Aid**

*Handouts:* Paying for College is a Family Affair  
Sample Shopping Sheet for the US Department of Education  
Student Bulletin: Quick Guide to Financial Aid Terms  
Student Bulletin: Types of Aid  
Student Bulletin: Key Loan Terms  
Student Bulletin: Understanding Your Financial Aid Letter  
Sample Shopping Sheet from US Dept. of Education

**Activity #2: Using the FAFSA4caster****Activity #3: Wrap-up**

*Handout:* The Great Sorting Game

**Activity #4: Evaluation**

*Handout:* Final Evaluation

## 6

## Session 6: Financial Aid

# Activity #1: Understanding Financial Aid

## Opening Discussion

Understanding financial aid may seem to be a difficult task but, with help, it can be manageable and it is well worth the effort. There are lots of opportunities for students to receive enough aid to attend even the most expensive college.

## Handouts

Paying for College is a Family Affair

**Sample Shopping Sheet for the US Department of Education**

**Student Bulletin: Quick Guide to Financial Aid Terms**

**Student Bulletin: Types of Aid**

**Student Bulletin: Key Loan Terms**

**Student Bulletin: Understanding Your Financial Aid Letter**

**Sample Shopping Sheet from US Dept. of Education**

## Instructions

1. Read "Paying for College is a Family Affair" with the students, answering questions as they arise.
2. Ask students to work in pairs with the "Quick Guide to Financial Aid Terms." One student will ask the other what he or she thinks the definition of the terms might mean. If the answer is correct, then they star (\*) the term. Student pairs should alternate asking/answering the questions. Once all sets of pairs have completed the exercise, then the facilitator can determine which group came up with the most accurate definitions of the terms. The students should be encouraged to take this handout home.
3. Next, give the students "Understanding your Financial Aid Letter."
4. Instruct students to take all the handouts home and discuss them with their families. *If possible, they should try to get on at least one of the suggested websites and, if they are seniors, they should go to the FAFSA website or ask their school counselor for a paper copy.*



## Paying for College is a Family Affair

The average cost of tuition and fees for the 2016–2017 academic year, according to the College Board, was \$33,480 at private colleges, \$9,650 for state residents at public colleges, and \$24,930 for out-of-state residents attending public universities. These costs do not include the additional cost of room and board if a student is living on campus. Many students who earn admission to college never go because they don't complete the financial aid process. But there are lots of ways to pay for college and lots of information and help are available to students who need financial aid assistance.

### *Facts:*

- The earlier you begin to think about paying for college the better.
- Money is available to almost every student who attends college.
- No one gets financial aid by wishing! You need to apply and follow through.
- Even the most ambitious student will need assistance from the adults in the household to complete the financial aid application process.
- You don't need to pay anyone to help you apply for financial aid! Beware of anyone who offers a service for a fee.
- Often the most expensive colleges have the deepest pockets and can help the very neediest students to make college affordable.

In a perfect world, families begin thinking about college finances when their children are still in grade school. But we all know this isn't a perfect world. The time for you to start thinking about paying for college is today!

### *There is a lot of money available to students with need.*

While it is true that the cost of college usually increases each year, there is more financial aid than ever before. According to the College Board, undergraduate and graduate students received a total of \$240.9 billion in grants from all sources, federal work study, federal loans, and federal tax credits and deductions in the 2015–2016 academic year.

Additional money for college is available from the following sources:

- State grant and loan programs
- College and university grant and scholarship programs
- Scholarships from private foundations, corporations, and community organizations.

### *These are the sources of financial aid:*

- **Grants and scholarships:** Also called “gift aid,” grants are based on financial need and don't need to be repaid. Scholarships are most-often awarded on the basis of strong academic achievement, a special talent or ability, or personal characteristics.
- **Federal Work-study:** This option gives students the opportunity for part-time employment either on campus or off campus at a private, nonprofit organization, or public agency to help them meet their financial need.
- **Loans:** These are offered to students or parents and must be repaid. Loans that are awarded based on financial need are low-interest loans, usually sponsored by the federal government. Interest on these loans is paid by the government for students with the greatest need. Repayment doesn't begin until six months after completion of the college program and may be deferred until a later date under some special circumstances.

### Easy Steps to Apply for Financial Aid

1. Every student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the most common application required by many colleges, and should be completed as soon possible after Oct. 1 of your senior year in high school and no later than the priority deadline for each college you apply to. *As the name says, this is free!* The preferred method for completing this form is online, although a paper copy is available. [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
2. A few colleges and universities also require that students complete a financial aid form specific to the institution or the College Scholarship Service Profile application, which is offered through the College Board. There is a fee for this form, but fee waivers are available through school counselors and college financial aid offices.
3. Financial aid offices use the information provided through these forms to determine a family's ability to pay for college. This is called the "estimated family contribution" (EFC), and it is always the same, regardless of the cost of the college. Your financial aid offer will cover the difference between your EFC and the cost of attendance for your prospective college. That means that financial aid can help you afford even the most expensive college if you are admitted.
4. In the spring of senior year, colleges notify students of the amount and type of aid offered.
5. Students have until May 1 to compare offers of admission and financial aid in order to make one final college enrollment decision.

There are many people and resources who can help you find your way through the financial aid process. Your school counselor, your teachers, adults in your community or place of worship may all be available to advise you. *At every college you consider, financial aid officers will be eager to help students and families understand and complete the financial aid process. Don't be afraid to ask for lots and lots of help.*

If you are a good student and an active participant in school and community, you may qualify for scholarships offered by corporations, foundations, religious organizations, or community groups. Ask at your school about possibilities. Do some research online at [www.fastWeb.com](http://www.fastWeb.com).

In the end, all of the work required to apply for financial aid is well worth the effort! In 2015:

- College graduates earned an average of \$50,651 (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts>)
- High School graduates earned an average of \$30,000 ([www.nacweb.org/s11182015/starting-salary-class-2015.aspx](http://www.nacweb.org/s11182015/starting-salary-class-2015.aspx))

*Over the course of your life and career that difference will make up for the cost of even the most expensive college—many times over!*

For more information on financial aid visit: [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov) and [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

# Sample Shopping Sheet from the US Department of Education

MM / DD / YYYY

University of the United States (UUS)  
Student Name, Identifier

Download

**Costs in the 2017-18 year**

Estimated Cost of Attendance		\$X,XXX / yr
Tuition and fees	\$ X,XXX	
Housing and meals.....	X,XXX	
Books and supplies	X,XXX	
Transportation .....	X,XXX	
Other education costs .....	X,XXX	

**Grants and scholarships to pay for college**

Total Grants and Scholarships ("Gift" Aid; no repayment needed)		\$X,XXX / yr
Grants and scholarships from your school	\$ X,XXX	
Federal Pell Grant.....	X,XXX	
Grants from your state.....	X,XXX	
Other scholarships you can use	X,XXX	

**What will you pay for college**

Net Costs	\$X,XXX / yr
(Cost of attendance minus total grants and scholarships)	

**Options to pay net costs**

**Work options**

Work-Study (Federal, state, or institutional) .....	\$ X,XXX
---	----------

**Loan Options\***

Federal Perkins Loan	\$ X,XXX
Federal Direct Subsidized Loan.....	X,XXX
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan	X,XXX

\*Recommended amounts shown here. You may be eligible for a different amount. Contact your financial aid office.

**Other options**

Family Contribution		\$X,XXX / yr
(As calculated by the institution using information reported on the FAFSA or to your institution.)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payment plan offered by the institution</li> <li>Parent or Graduate PLUS Loans</li> <li>American Opportunity Tax Credit *</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Military and/or National Service benefits</li> <li>Non-Federal private education loan</li> </ul>	

\*Parents or students may qualify to receive up to \$2,500 by claiming the American Opportunity Tax Credit on their tax return during the following calendar year.

**Graduation Rate**  
Percentage of full-time students who graduate within 6 years

XX.X%

Low Medium High

---

**Repayment Rate**  
Percentage of borrowers entering into repayment within 3 years of leaving school

XX.X%

This institution

X.X% National Average

---

**Median Borrowing**  
Students who borrow at UUS typically take out \$X,XXX in Federal loans for their undergraduate study. The Federal loan payment over 10 years for this amount is approximately \$X,XXX per month. Your borrowing may be different.

**Repaying your loans**

To learn about loan repayment choices and work out your Federal Loan monthly payment, go to:  
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/understand/plans>

**For more information and next steps:**  
**University of the United States (UUS) Financial Aid Office**  
123 Main Street  
Anytown, ST 12345  
Telephone: (123) 456-7890  
E-mail: financialaid@uus.edu

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### Quick Guide to Financial Aid Terms

A few weeks after filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you will receive a copy of your Student Aid Report (SAR) with your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The prospective college(s) will receive your FAFSA information as well. Each school you applied to will send you a Financial Aid Award Letter, breaking down the college costs and summarizing your eligibility for each type of financial aid. The aid offered in the letter will be based on your demonstrated financial need, which is equal to the Cost of Attendance (COA) minus your EFC. To understand the financial aid process better, here are the key terms you need to know:

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The FAFSA is a form used to apply for student financial aid from the federal and state government, as well as most colleges and universities. The government uses the information from your FAFSA to determine your expected family contribution (EFC). You can file the FAFSA at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

**Personal Identification Number (PIN):** A PIN is a 4-digit number used to electronically sign the online version of the FAFSA. The student and parent must each obtain their own PIN at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov). The PIN also gives you access to personal records on the US Department of Education web site. Do not share your PIN with anybody.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** The SAR is the official notification sent to you about a week after filing the FAFSA online. This document includes your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The SAR also provides information about the colleges you are considering, such as the graduation rates.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** The EFC is a measure of your family's financial strength. It is based on the information you submitted on the FAFSA, including income, assets, family size and the number of children in college. Your EFC represents the amount of money the federal government believes your family can contribute toward one academic year of college. It is a harsh assessment of ability to pay, since it does not consider many types of consumer debt, such as credit card debt, student loan debt and auto loans. The actual amount your family ends up paying could be higher or lower than the EFC figure, depending on the sources of aid available to you.

There are two main formulas for calculating an EFC, the federal methodology (FM) and the institutional methodology (IM). The two formulas differ in the types of assets that are included (e.g., family home, assets of siblings), the assumption of a minimum student contribution, the treatment of paper losses, regional differences in cost of living, allowances for educational savings and emergency funds, the treatment of children of divorced parents and adjustments for more than one child in college at the same time. The FM EFC is used for determining eligibility for federal and state aid and financial aid at most colleges. About 250 colleges use the IM EFC for awarding their own financial aid funds.

**Financial Aid Package:** The financial aid package is a combination of multiple types and sources of financial aid available to you to help pay for college costs. It may include money from the federal government, state government, the college itself and private sources. It can include scholarships, grants, work-study and loans. The financial aid offered by each college may vary. The financial aid packages are typically summarized in financial aid award letters sent to you by your prospective colleges.

**Financial Aid Award Letter:** The financial aid award letter is the list of all the aid from multiple sources that you are eligible to receive through your prospective college, including terms and conditions. You are not required to accept every type of aid found in the letter. For example, you could turn down loans. Turning down loans, however, will not increase the amount of grants and/or scholarships you may receive.

**Cost of Attendance (COA):** The cost of attendance includes the total price of tuition, fees, room, board, textbooks, supplies, transportation and personal expenses for one year of college. This is also known at some colleges as the "Student Budget." There may be separate student budgets for students who live on campus, off campus or with their parents. Some colleges will adjust the cost of attendance to include the cost of a computer, student health insurance and dependent care.

**Net Price:** The net price or out-of-pocket cost is the bottom line cost of college. It is the difference between the cost of attendance and grants. It is the amount of money you must pay from savings, income and loans to cover college costs.

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### Types of Aid

There are many different types of financial aid available from federal and state government, college and private sources. The major types of financial aid include:

**Grants** are awards typically based on financial need that do not need to be repaid. An example is the Federal Pell Grant. Eligibility often depends on your EFC and/or financial need. For example, the Federal Pell Grant is based on your EFC.

**Scholarships** are awards usually based on achievement or talent that also do not need to be paid back. You can search for scholarships for free at [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com). Fastweb adds and updates scholarships every single day, and will send you email notification when there's a new scholarship that matches your personal background profile. Also, your prospective college(s) may offer scholarships based on academic merit and/or financial need. Call the financial aid office to find out which scholarships are available to you and how you can apply.

**Federal Work-Study (FWS)** provides part-time jobs for students with financial need. The jobs are usually available on or near campus. A list of available jobs can be found at the college's financial aid office or student employment office. Students who don't qualify for a work-study job may still be able to find student employment to help pay for college bills or get a little spending money.

**Loans** are funds that must be paid back, usually with interest. There are federal student loans, federal parent loans, and private or alternative loans. The good news is that interest rates for education loans are currently at historic lows. However, you must demonstrate financial need for some loans, like the Federal Perkins Loan or the Federal subsidized Stafford Loan. Other loans, such as the Federal unsubsidized Stafford loan and the Federal Parent PLUS loan, do not depend on financial need. Private student loans may depend on your credit history. To find out more about loans, visit [www.finaid.org/loans](http://www.finaid.org/loans).

**Education Tax Benefits** are available to you and your parents when you file your federal income tax returns based on amounts you paid for college. The most popular education tax benefits are the Hope Scholarship tax credit, Lifetime Learning tax credit and the student loan interest deduction.

**American Opportunity Tax Credit** is a temporary enhancement of the Hope Scholarship tax credit. It will expire at the end of 2012 unless extended by Congress. The full \$2,500 credit is available to individuals with modified adjusted gross income of \$80,000 or less and to married couples filing a joint return with modified AGI of \$160,000 or less. For more information about the Hope Scholarship tax credit and other education tax benefits, visit [www.finaid.org/taxbenefits](http://www.finaid.org/taxbenefits).

**Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)**. Students who work full-time in a public service job for 10 years may qualify to have their remaining debt forgiven. Public service loan forgiveness works in conjunction with income-based repayment. Public service jobs include public school teachers, police, fire, EMT, members of the military, public defenders, prosecutors and others who work for the city, state and federal government, as well as people working for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organizations. Public service loan forgiveness is available only for federal student loans. Private student loans and Federal Parent PLUS loans are not eligible. To find out more about public service loan forgiveness, visit [www.finaid.org/publicservice](http://www.finaid.org/publicservice).



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### Key Loan Terms

Federal education loans, including both student loans and parent loans, are available direct from the federal government and are administered by your college. Private student loans, sometimes called alternative loans, are available from a private lender (like a bank) and have interest rates and repayment terms set by the lender and not the government. Here are loan terms you need to know:

**Annual Percentage Rate (APR):** The APR is the overall cost of borrowing money, expressed as an annual percentage of the loan balance. The APR calculates the combined impact of the interest rate, loan fees, capitalization of interest (the addition of unpaid interest to the principal) and other repayment terms.

**Cancellation:** Some loan programs provide for cancellation (forgiveness) of the loan under certain circumstances, such as death or total and permanent disability of the borrower.

**Capitalization:** Capitalization is the practice of adding unpaid interest charges to the principal balance of an education loan, thereby increasing the size and cost of the loan. Interest is then charged on the new balance, including both the unpaid principal and the accrued interest. Interest can be capitalized monthly, quarterly, annually or when the loan enters repayment. Capitalization causes interest to be charged on top of interest.

**Consolidation:** A consolidation loan combines one or more eligible federal educational loans into a single new loan.

**Default:** Default is the failure to repay your loan according to the terms. It may lead to legal action to recover the money and can negatively affect your credit rating. Private student loans are considered to be in default after 120 days of nonpayment, while federal education loans are considered to be in default after 360 days of nonpayment.

**Deferment:** A deferment is a postponement of payment on a federal loan that is allowed under certain conditions and during which the government pays the interest on any subsidized loans. The borrower is responsible for the interest on any unsubsidized loans during a deferment. The economic hardship deferment has a three-year limit. Deferments during the in-school period are unlimited.

**Forbearance:** A forbearance is a period during which your monthly loan payments are temporarily suspended or reduced. Interest continues to accrue and will be capitalized if unpaid by the borrower. You may qualify for a forbearance if you are willing but unable to make loan payments due to certain types of financial hardships. Federal loans have a five-year limit on forbearances. Private student loans typically have a one-year limit.

**Interest:** Interest is a periodic fee for borrowing money, expressed as a percentage of the loan balance. Interest rates are either variable (the rate can change) or fixed (the rate will not change). The interest rate on a variable rate loan can reset (change) annually, quarterly or monthly.

**Loan Fees:** Loan fees are one-time charges to originate or guarantee a loan, expressed as a percentage of the loan balance.

**Principal:** The principal is the full amount borrowed. During repayment, it refers to the portion of the original loan amount still owed (not including interest or fees).

**Promissory Note:** A promissory note is a binding legal document you sign when you get a student loan. It contains the loan terms and conditions under which you're borrowing and the terms under which you agree to pay back the loan. It may also mention deferment and cancellation provisions available to the borrower.

**Subsidized:** The government pays the interest on subsidized loans while the student is in school, during the six-month grace period and during any deferment periods. Subsidized loans are awarded based on demonstrated financial need. Note: The government will not pay interest on subsidized loans awarded in 2012-13 and 2013-14 during the six-month grace period. The government will continue to pay interest on these loans during the in-school and other deferment periods.

**Unsubsidized:** An unsubsidized loan is a loan for which the government does not pay the interest. The borrower is responsible for the interest on an unsubsidized loan from the date the loan is disbursed, even while the student is still in school. Students may avoid paying the interest while they are in school by capitalizing the interest, which adds the interest to the loan balance. Examples of unsubsidized loans include the unsubsidized Stafford loan and the Parent PLUS loans. These loans are not based on financial need or income and may be used to pay for the family share of college costs.

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## Understanding Your Financial Aid Award Letter

Use this example as a guide to reading your financial aid award letter. Remember, you can choose to accept or decline any part of your financial aid package. If you decide to decline any type of aid, contact the Financial Aid Office. If you have any questions, make sure to contact your prospective college's aid office immediately.

Expenses (COA*)		Resources (EFC*)	
Tuition:	\$7,334	Parent's Contribution	
Room/Board	\$5,204	From Earnings	\$2,500
Health Fees	\$ 176	From Assets	\$ 112
Books/Supplies	\$1,015	Student's Contribution	\$ 500
Personal	\$2,600	<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>\$3,112</b>
Transportation	\$ 900		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$17,239</b>		

\*Cost of Attendance (COA): The total expenses (tuition, fees, etc.) of one year's education. Your college may also include indirect costs (books, room and board, transportation, personal expenses, etc.). Our example includes both direct and indirect expenses.

\*Expected Family Contribution: Amount your family is expected to contribute determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The amount you end up actually paying for the academic year, could differ from the EFC, depending on what resources are available at the college you decide to attend.

### Sample Award Letter Explained

Dear Student:

The results of your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) indicate that you are eligible for financial assistance for the upcoming academic year. We are pleased to offer you the following financial aid award. Please review each type of award before accepting.

Award	Federal Pell Grant (free money)		Option to accept or decline each award		Total
	Fall	Spring	Accept	Decline	
Federal Pell Grant	\$ 625	\$ 625	€	€	\$1,250
<b>Total Direct Loans</b>					<b>\$6,876</b>
Direct Federal Stafford Loan (Subsidized)	\$1,500	\$1,500	€	€	
Direct Federal Stafford Loan (Unsubsidized)	\$1,938	\$1,938	€	€	
<b>Total Financial Aid Package</b>					<b>\$8,126</b>

**Federal Stafford Loan – Unsubsidized**  
(Interest accrues immediately after loan is disbursed)

**Federal Stafford Loan – Subsidized**  
(Interest-free until graduation when repayment of interest & principal begins)

### What does this mean to you?

Cost of Attendance (COA)	\$17,239
Less Gift Aid (Pell Grant)	- \$1,250
<b>Out-of-Pocket Cost (Net Price)</b>	<b>\$15,989</b>

The out-of-pocket cost (net price) is the difference between the cost of attendance and the gift aid, such as grants and scholarships. It is the amount of money you will have to pay from savings (past income), income and loans (future income). Scholarships and grants will always be the best way to meet the costs of a college education. Search for scholarships at free websites like [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)!



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Session 6: Financial Aid

## Activity #2: Using the FAFSA4caster

### Opening Discussion

FAFSA4caster will help you get an early start on the financial aid process by:

- Providing you with an early estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid
- Giving you an experience similar to FAFSA on the web
- Allowing you to transfer all of your FAFSA4caster data to FAFSA on the web once you are ready to apply for aid
- Providing you with the option to apply for your Federal Student Aid ID (FSAID)\*
- Increasing your knowledge of the financial aid process, and providing information about other sources of aid.

\*Your FSAID username and password allow you to access certain parts of the US Department of Education website. It confirms your identity when accessing your financial aid information and allows you to electronically sign documents.

### Resources

- Computers with high-speed internet access
- Financial aid officer from a local college

*\*Note: If a computer with internet access isn't available, guide students through completion of the FAFSA sheet in preparation for completing the FAFSA on the web.*

### Instructions

Walk students through the FAFSA4caster at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate>.



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Session 6: Financial Aid

## Activity #3: Wrap-Up

### *Opening Discussion*

The Great Sorting Game engages students in an enjoyable mock-admission simulation. The purpose is to help students understand the many factors weighed in admission decisions. The game should generate discussion that will summarize many of the issues presented so far.

### *Activity/Handout*

#### **The Great Sorting Game**

# The Great Sorting Game

## Getting Started

Find nine volunteers to be admission candidates. Secure an additional volunteer to play the director of admission. The director reads the qualities and tells students whether to move up or down in the competition. Hand out the GPAs in random order and then instruct admission candidate volunteers to organize themselves in GPA order from highest to lowest. Don't let the audience see their cards. (This is generally a couple of minutes of comedy relief because players have trouble getting organized. This is part of the fun.)

## Scenario

The group of non-volunteers is told that they are the Admission Committee from "College University" (or pick a better and funnier name). The committee is at the very end of the admission cycle and still has nine great applicants, but can only admit three students. All have very appealing qualities, but there is simply not enough room in the class for all nine. Before them they see the candidates. Point out that they are standing in GPA order from highest to lowest. Also emphasize that all are great candidates and so the committee will have to decide based upon personal qualities and qualifications. Point out that if the committee were to decide *only* on academics, the three with the highest GPAs would get in.

The Great Sorting Game is intended to be a lighthearted and instructional demonstration that gives participants insight into some of the factors considered in a holistic, selective admission process. For students to understand why these factors matter to institutions, there should be some discussion of each factor after each move led by the facilitator.

The personal qualities/qualifications are then read and the volunteers are asked to exchange places (move up and down in the order) based upon what is read. *(To make this work, if more than one student is moving down at the same time, the lowest student must move first and visa versa—if more than one student is moving up, the highest student must move first.)* You may choose to alter the qualities/qualifications and the weight given to each.

Stop after each quality read to discuss why this helped or hindered the candidate. As an example: you may ask, "Why do you think it might not be helpful to declare your major as pre-med or psychology?" After reading the "Greek Major" quality, point out that many selective colleges' Classics Professors only want a few students in their classes. Stop after the Early Decision qualification to discuss how this may play into a decision by a college. In this way, it is more than reading the qualities. It is a way to generate discussion.

## The Ending

After all qualities have been read and candidates have been "sorted," have the candidates turn their GPA sheets around to reveal the GPA to reveal to the audience. Read through the GPAs, pointing out the new order and note that the top three sorted candidates are going to be admitted.

You might choose to have a small prize to thank the volunteers.

*Qualities, which are read, and places to move up and down in the line:*

1. IF YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM +2
2. IF YOU PLAY THE OBOE OR VIOLA +1
3. IF YOU CLEARLY STATED THAT THIS COLLEGE WAS YOUR FIRST CHOICE BY MAKING AN EARLY DECISION APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT +2
4. IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PSYCHOLOGY OR PREMED -1
5. IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS GREEK +2
6. IF YOU DON'T KNOW ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS WELL AND HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -2
7. IF, WHEN YOU TYPED YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY, YOU FORGOT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE YOU WERE APPLYING TO, -4
8. IF YOU ARE A LEGACY +2
9. IF YOU DIDN'T WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION -1
10. IF THE TOPIC OF YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY WAS "WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS" -1
11. IF YOU WROTE THE ESSAY OF THE YEAR—THE ONE THAT WAS PASSED AROUND THE ENTIRE ADMISSION OFFICE IT WAS SO REMARKABLE + 3
12. IF YOU PLAGIARIZED AN AP AMERICAN HISTORY PAPER AND GOT CAUGHT—SIT DOWN, YOU'RE OUT OF THE COMPETITION ENTIRELY
13. IF YOU WILL BE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ATTEND COLLEGE +2
14. IF YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS +2
15. IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES -3
16. IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT +1
17. IF YOU ARE AN EAGLE SCOUT +2
18. IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE +2, AND IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE AND TOOK SECOND-PLACE AT REGIONALS IN YOUR SPORT MOVE UP ONE MORE (A TOTAL OF 3)
19. IF YOU GOT A "D" IN AN ACADEMIC COURSE AT THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR -3
20. IF YOU CAME TO THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE (AND IN THE CASE OF THE STUDENT WHO JUST GOT THE "D", EXPLAINED THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES) +1
21. IF YOU ARE A RESIDENT OF IDAHO +3
22. IF YOU NEVER GAVE YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN WRITING YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -1
23. IF YOUR LAST NAME IS ON THE COLLEGE LIBRARY—AND IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE—MOVE ALL THE WAY TO THE FRONT AND STAY THERE

# 4.0

- YOU DIDN'T WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION
- YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
- YOU ARE A RESIDENT OF IDAHO

## 3.9

- YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PRE-MED
- YOU WROTE YOUR ESSAY ON “WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS”
- YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

## 3.8

- YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PSYCHOLOGY
- WHEN YOU TYPED YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY, YOU FORGOT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE TO WHICH YOU WERE APPLYING
- YOU PLAGIARIZED AN AP AMERICAN HISTORY PAPER AND GOT CAUGHT

## 3.7

- YOU PLAY THE VIOLA
- YOU DON'T KNOW ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS WELL AND HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION
- YOU DIDN'T WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION
- YOU NEVER GAVE YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN WRITING YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION

## 3.6

- YOU CLEARLY STATED THAT THIS COLLEGE WAS YOUR FIRST CHOICE BY MAKING AN EARLY DECISION APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT
- THE TOPIC OF YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY WAS “WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS”
- YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT OR TRIP
- YOU ATTENDED THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE



## 3.5

- YOU PLAY THE OBOE
- YOU PLAN TO MAJOR IN GREEK
- YOU ARE A LEGACY
- YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

## 3.4

- YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE
  - YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- YOU WILL BE THE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ATTEND COLLEGE
- YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

## 3.3

- YOU WROTE THE ESSAY OF THE YEAR—THE ONE THAT WAS PASSED AROUND THE ENTIRE ADMISSION OFFICE IT WAS SO REMARKABLE
- YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE AND TOOK SECOND-PLACE AT REGIONAL COMPETITION IN YOUR SPORT
- YOU GOT A “D” IN AN ACADEMIC COURSE AT THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR
- YOU ATTENDED THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE (AND OFFERED AN EXPLANATION OF YOUR “D” GRADE)

## 3.2

- YOU ARE A LEGACY
- YOU ARE AN EAGLE SCOUT
- YOUR LAST NAME IS ON THE COLLEGE LIBRARY—AND IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE

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Session 6: Financial Aid

## Activity #4: Evaluation

### *Activity/Handout*

#### **Evaluation**

### *Instructions*

1. Hand out the evaluation form. Ask students to complete it. Encourage them to be honest and provide suggestions useful for future workshops.
2. Hand out certificates and thank the participants.
3. Final instruction for facilitator: Complete the evaluation for volunteers.

# 7

## Resources for Late High School: Parent/Guardian Workshop

### Objectives

- To introduce parents and guardians to the high school-to-college transition and the college application process
- To encourage parents and guardians to engage in organized, step-by-step planning of their children's educational goals.

### Message

With more than 4,700 two- and four-year colleges in the US, how will students pick the right one? Beyond taking the right courses and doing well, what steps will students need to follow to get into college? How can families help?

This section will focus on these questions and concerns by following the road to college. Preparing for college is an extremely exciting time in the life of the student, filled with challenge, opportunity, and decision-making.

Because the process of selecting a college is very personal, it must begin with self-reflection. Students may wish to examine their goals, strengths, weaknesses, and reasons for going to college. Then, the student may want to determine what characteristics he or she will look for in deciding which colleges to explore.

While the student is going through this awareness or assessment period, it is important to be realistic. As one experienced counselor said about the college exploration process, "Dream, but keep one foot on the ground."

### Methods

Parents, guardians, and counselors can help in college exploration by encouraging the student to find the answers to a number of questions. It's extremely important to have the student—not the parent or guardian—answer the questions. The role of the family is to guide, not steer, the student through the exploration process. Parents should resist the temptation to impose their values and goals on the student's answers to these exploratory questions.

## Introductions

Any time you have a workshop for parents and families, it is a great idea to have an icebreaker. The “How Do You Define College” sheet from Session I of the Late High School Curriculum is perfect for opening this workshop.

## Discussion Questions

This workshop affords the *Step by Step* presenter a number of opportunities to engage in dialogue with parents and participants. Some of the characteristics and discussion topics to interject are listed below:

- When discussing the questions a student should consider in choosing a college, the *Step by Step* presenter can complement the message by citing specific examples of colleges that fit certain characteristics.
- When discussing the college application process and admission folder, it might be useful to distribute sample applications and display an admission folder with an actual transcript or other school records. Be certain to protect the anonymity of the subject.
- Ask parents to consider appropriate support roles after the college responds to the application. How should parents respond to admit, deny, or wait list decisions?

## Activities

- Ask panel of parents and guardians of college students to talk with the group.
- Invite several former students (if possible) to participate in a discussion of the questions a student should ask when exploring college opportunities.
- Distribute a number of sample college mailings, viewbooks, and comprehensive guides to let the parents and guardians see the various options that exist for students considering a four-year college or university.
- Demonstrate how the internet can be used to research college and financial aid options.
- Schedule a visit to the admission office at a local college or university or invite an admission counselor/officer to present. When visiting a campus, arrange for parents to see the same things that students would see.
- Schedule a visit to a National College Fair (visit [www.nacacfairs.org](http://www.nacacfairs.org) to see if one is held in your city or metropolitan area) or a college fair program sponsored by the local school district.
- Search [www.collegeparentcentral.com](http://www.collegeparentcentral.com) for more parent resources.

## Resources

In addition to the resources that follow, presenters may wish to acquire the following NACAC resources at [www.nacacnet.org/pubs](http://www.nacacnet.org/pubs):

- Financial Aid... in 7 Easy Steps
- For-Profit Colleges: What to Know Before You Enroll
- Get in the Game: Tips for Student-Athletes and Their Families
- Going Through the College Admission Process: Preparing, Researching, Applying and Deciding
- Guide for Families in the College Admission Process
- Guide to the College Admission Process..

*Step by Step* presenters can also gather the following local information for use as handouts:

- College brochures, catalogs, and viewbooks
- Information from college websites
- A sample admission folder, including the college application.

## Asking the Right Questions

- Does your child want a small college or a large university? A two-year or four-year program? Large or small classes?
- Does your child want a school with a specific major or a school that offers a variety of majors and programs? Is he/she interested in liberal arts? Business? Engineering? Trade or technical?
- In what geographical area does the student wish to study? How far away from home? Urban environment with lots of options or small town serenity? Does he/she want to live on campus or live at home and commute?
- What extracurricular activities, athletics, and clubs are offered? Are there fraternities and sororities? What type of housing?
- What are the costs? How will these costs be met? How much and what type of financial aid is available?
- How diverse is the campus? What is the ethnic, racial, and religious make-up of the student body? Is it coeducational or a single-sex institution? Is it political or non-political?

Once your child has had an opportunity to review these questions and come up with at least tentative answers, it is time to involve the school counselor once again. The counselor can relate these answers to the student's academic profile including grades, rank in class, test scores, and student activities. With the help of the counselor, the student can make a list of colleges that meet his or her specific needs and are consistent with the student's academic profile.

### *A Note on the Right College*

Every student aspires to find the right college and it is very possible to achieve that goal. Students and parents should keep in mind, though, that there is seldom just one right school or 3,000 wrong schools. In reality, there are a number of right colleges and universities waiting to be discovered by students.

More important is finding a college that is right for the student, and that the goals and personality of the student fit with the college. Students who think first about who they are and what they want are more likely to choose a college that fits them. The use of interest and personality inventories may be useful to help students understand their personality, and learning style, and help to identify careers that may best suit them.

### *Gathering Information About Colleges*

With his or her list of colleges in hand, the student should begin to learn as much as possible about each school. The search may begin in the counseling office and continue on the internet.

Many school counseling offices offer technology to assist students in making a list of colleges and finding out more about specific colleges. Counseling offices may collect brochures and catalogs from a variety of colleges. Students can browse through college guidebooks and books on the college application and financial aid process (available in the counseling office, libraries, and local book stores).

The internet is also a rich source of information on colleges. Most schools and public libraries offer free access to computers and the internet. Students can visit comprehensive college and financial aid websites, as well as the websites of specific colleges.

The search for the right college may not be over until the student has participated in a college fair and visited college campuses, if possible. Some schools and community organizations provide field trips to local colleges. Parents and guardians should encourage this information-gathering process and participate with their children.



### Ask the Right Questions Checklist

When helping your student determine postsecondary options, use this checklist.

<b>College Size</b>	Large	Medium	Small
<b>Class Size</b>	Large	Medium	Small
<b>Type of Institution</b>	Two-Year (Associate Degree)		Four-Year (Bachelor's Degree)
	Public	Private	For-profit
	Liberal Arts	University	Community College
	Vocational-technical or Career College		College with specialized focus (arts, single-sex, religious, etc.)
<b>Geographic Area</b>	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	Far from Home	Close to Home	
	On campus	Commuter	
<b>Extracurricular Activities</b>	Athletics Clubs		Fraternities/Sororities Other
<b>Costs</b>	High	Mid	Low
<b>Financial Aid</b>	Participates in federal programs (FAFSA, state aid)		Doesn't participate*
<b>Campus Diversity</b>	Ethnic	Religious	
	Co-ed	Single-sex	
	Political	Non-political	

### Special Considerations

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\*Be very cautious about considering a school that doesn't participate in federal student aid programs. (Generally these are for-profit institutions.)

# College Breakdown

## 1. Preparing

**Talk** – talk with your family, your high school counselor, friends, coaches, and anyone else who has served as a positive role model for you about your hopes, dreams, aspirations, fears, and desires for your future.

**Learn** – engage your education, learn how to study and take the most challenging courses that are available and appropriate for you. A strong academic performance in high school demonstrates to a college you are ready for the academic challenges you will face there.

**Participate** – get involved in a few extracurricular activities you really enjoy and commit to them. Strive to become a leader in that activity. For example, start writing for the school newspaper in ninth grade and work your way up to editor senior year. Life on a college campus is more than classes and a college wants students who will enrich the experience for others.

**Plan** – what do you need to do between today and when your college applications are due to make yourself a viable applicant to the college or university of your choice? Are you taking the necessary courses? What standardized tests are required?

## 2. Researching

Learn as much as you can about schools that interest you to discover if they are right for you. You should learn a lot more than just whether or not they offer your possible major. Empower yourself by having the necessary information to make knowledgeable decisions. Fortunately, learning about colleges has never been easier. The information you should be looking for is usually just a click away.

Some questions to help you get started:

- How much does it cost to attend and might you qualify for financial aid? (The schools online Net Price Calculator is a good place to start, but contact the admission/financial aid office to discuss aid options).
- What types of financial aid are available?
- What resources are available? How do they support a student with learning differences or who is physically challenged?
- What activities and clubs are available?
- What are your housing options?
- Does the college have a career counseling and placement office? Pre-professional advising (pre-med, pre-law, pre-vet, etc.)?

Your counselor will be able to help you think of many, many more questions that you should be considering.

And if you can, visit the college or university. There is no substitute for first-hand experience.

**Resources to help your research:**

Financial Aid: [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

Campus Safety: <http://ope.ed.gov/campussafety>

General Information About Schools:

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>

[www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org)

<http://nsse.iub.edu>

[www.nacacfacts.org](http://www.nacacfacts.org)

### 3. Applying

Actually applying for admission to a college isn't as intimidating a task as you may think. Yes, you will need to complete forms online; gather information about yourself, your family, your activities; and, most likely, you will need to write a personal statement. It is all very doable. Your counselor is there to help—ask.

Some things for you to remember:

- Don't miss deadlines—submitting an application for admission or financial aid after the deadline may automatically make you ineligible for consideration. No application for admission can be due prior to Oct. 15. This is a bonus for you!
- Fill out the FAFSA and/or additional financial aid forms because financial aid procedures can differ from school to school.
- You need to be the sole author of your application—complete it yourself. You may ask for advice, but the words need to be yours.
- No college should ask you where they rank on your list. You aren't obligated to tell a college where else you are applying.
- You should never feel pressured into applying to a college—admission officers are there to tell you about opportunities and give you accurate information.

*Different application plans have different requirements and obligations.*

*Be sure you understand them:*

**Early Decision** – if you apply Early Decision, you are committing yourself to attend that college if admitted. You file the application early in senior year and are notified of the college's decision around the end of the fall semester. You may have only one active Early Decision application filed at a time.

**Early Action** – you apply to the college during fall of your senior year and the college notifies you well before their Regular Decision deadline as to their decision. You aren't obligated to attend the school. You may submit Early Action applications to multiple colleges.

**Single Choice Early Action or Restrictive Early Action** – this is the same concept as Early Action, but the colleges that use this form will restrict your ability to apply Early Action or Early Decision to other colleges.

**Rolling Admission** – a college will make its admission decision soon after an application is completed. Decisions are released on a “rolling” basis.

**Regular Decision** – a college has a specific deadline by which all applications must be completed. All of the applications are evaluated, decisions are made, and notification letters are then mailed to all applicants.

### *Deciding*

Once the admission offices have notified you of their decisions, you need to make your decision as to which school you will attend. It is a big decision, and an important one.

- Take your time, carefully evaluate all of the information and make the choice that is best for you.
- No college can require you to commit to attending prior to May 1, the National Candidates Reply Date, with the exception of Early Decision or NCAA athletic scholarship programs.
- If you have received financial aid offers, compare them carefully. Determine exactly what your out-of-pocket cost will be to attend each school.
- Attend prospective student events at the colleges to which you were admitted.
- Talk to your family, your counselor, and those you trust.
- You should never submit an enrollment deposit to more than one school. It is an unethical practice that may result in your acceptances being withdrawn by the colleges involved.
- Once you have decided, notify your college of choice that you will attend. (Sometimes this can be done online, but some schools require mailed forms to hold your spot.) Notify the colleges you won't attend to have your applications closed.
- If you have been offered a spot on a college's wait list, learn what you need to do to be an active member of the wait list.
- Be sure that you have a place to attend if you aren't eventually offered admission off the wait list.

# The School Counselor: A Valuable Resource

Counselors are one of the best resources your student has; they are students' allies. It is in students' best interest to meet with their counselor regularly. Counselors can help prospective college students in the following ways:

- Review the student's academic record, suggest areas that need improvement, and recommend courses that qualify for college admission.
- Provide specific information on a student's high school performance—rank in class, test scores, and grade point average are all details that colleges ask for when a student applies.
- Help the student identify the questions that start the admission process. These questions include “Do I want to stay near home? Does the college have my major? What clubs, sports, and activities are offered?” and the others listed earlier in this section.
- Suggest schools that might fit a student's answers to those questions.
- Show students where to find more information, such as books, catalogs, brochures, websites, and DVDs, on either the admission process or a specific college or university.
- Recommend evening/weekend programs that may be of value; refer students and parents to the counseling department website; remind students and parents to carefully read all information that is sent home about the college admission process.
- Clarify or explain terms, ideas, and experiences that students encounter during their research, campus visits, or interviews with college representatives.
- Help students meet deadlines for filing applications and taking college admission tests.
- Provide the necessary forms and explain the criteria students must satisfy to qualify for financial assistance.
- Write a letter of recommendation to colleges or universities, and help the student select teachers who can write letters of recommendation.
- Offer the emotional support, warmth, and encouragement that students need during the college admission process.

## *Ask Your Student's Counselor*

1. In what subjects can my student improve?
2. Can you recommend courses that will count toward college credit?
3. What is my student's class rank and GPA?
4. What are important questions to ask when considering an institution?
5. Ask about specific schools the student is interested in.
6. Where can I find more resources?
7. Are there after-school programs that would be helpful?
8. Clarify any terms or steps you're confused about.
9. Reaffirm deadlines.
10. What financial aid is available?
11. Who would you suggest to write a letter of recommendation for my student?
12. What else can I do to encourage my student?

# Prepare for College Checklists

## Junior Year

1. Often junior year grades are the final grades that will influence the college application.
2. Continue involvement in activities that will develop leadership skills; update the academic and extracurricular portfolio. If you aren't involved in extracurricular activities or work, it isn't too late to start.
3. Register for the October PSAT/NMSQT; register for SAT, ACT and/or SAT Subject Tests in the spring.
4. Set up the college application process checklist, college folders, and calendar.
5. With your family, begin to learn about financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study).
6. Meet with the school counselor to discuss your preliminary list of colleges; continue to research colleges of interest. Aim for a final list of three to eight colleges.
7. Attend college fairs and visit college campuses during spring break and summer vacation.
8. Choose meaningful summer activities: academic or enrichment programs, volunteer activities, or employment.
9. Begin preparation for the application process (draft essays, assemble portfolios, contact coaches if you are an athlete, consider letters of recommendation, etc.).
10. Continue saving for college.

## Senior Year

1. Continue to monitor academic progress throughout the senior year. Remember that colleges can rescind acceptance due to poor academic standing senior year.
2. Continue involvement in activities that utilize leadership skills; update your academic and extracurricular portfolio.
3. Take college admission tests as needed: SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests, and have test scores sent to the appropriate colleges.
4. Update the college application checklist and college folders. Write due dates on the calendar and meet them.
5. Complete all portions of the college application and submit on time. Make copies of everything.
6. Complete financial aid applications (for grants, scholarships, loans and work-study). This may include the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), the CSS Profile (if required), and the college's financial aid forms.
7. Set up interviews and final college visits.
8. As soon as they become available, review offers of acceptance, and compare financial aid packages, then make a decision of which college to attend.
9. Notify all colleges of your decision by May 1. Send required deposits.
10. Plan meaningful summer activities and pack for college.

## SAT and ACT

Colleges and universities may require either of these standardized tests for admission. To determine which test students should take, ask their high school counselors.

For SAT details, visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org); for ACT details, visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

# Gathering Information About Colleges

## *College Fairs and High School Visits*

One-on-one conversations with college admission counselors or alumni representatives can give students and parents considerable information about colleges and universities. Such contact with representatives from a variety of schools can be most easily accomplished by participating in college fairs and college night programs when they are offered in your school or community.

NACAC sponsors the National College Fair program, which offers more than 50 college fairs, more than 30 performing and visual arts fairs, and three STEM college and career fairs in major cities and metropolitan areas across the nation. Students can register for free at [www.gotomyncf.com](http://www.gotomyncf.com). When they register, they will receive a bar code that colleges will use to collect data (rather than filling out the old information cards). Representatives from hundreds of colleges are present at these fairs to explain their academic programs, admission requirements, extracurricular activities and answer questions. Similar programs are offered by counselors in many school systems. Parents are encouraged to participate in these programs.

To benefit from a college fair, students should use their list of important college characteristics to choose which colleges to visit at the fair. Students should also read fair materials to discover which colleges will attend the fair. Then, students and families can plan which college booths to visit first so that students are sure to meet with the representatives of all the colleges that interest them. Students should also write down a list of questions to ask every college representative with whom they speak. It may be helpful for students to bring a small notebook to jot down notes on their conversations with each college representative.

College admission representatives are also available to visit with students in their high school. The school counselor usually assists in scheduling these visits and maintains a calendar of colleges and visitation dates. Many admission representatives schedule both group meetings and individual appointments during these school visits. College fairs and high school visits permit the student to explore beyond the information contained on the internet and in publications and guidebooks. These visits allow students to personalize questions that are tailored to their specific needs.

## *Campus Visits*

As students refine their list of colleges, encourage them to visit campuses of colleges in which they are interested. In fact, parents should accompany their student to each campus as the experience will be informative for all. The time to visit a campus is after the student has looked at several sources of information about a school and decided that he or she would like to see the campus. Whenever possible, try to visit a college while classes are in session and students are on campus. There is no charge for visiting a college and no obligation to apply to that college.

To make the most of a college visit, be sure to call the admission office a few weeks before the visit and make an appointment to take a tour, meet with an admission representative, or attend an information session. Many colleges also have programs that coordinate overnight visits so that prospective students can spend the night in a residence hall. Some students may wish to talk with a particular faculty member or coach or to see a part of the campus not likely to be on the usual tour, so it is even more important to make arrangements in advance.

## *Interviews*

Most colleges recommend that students meet with an admission representative, but only a few require interviews as a part of the application process. As a result, these meetings are usually viewed as an opportunity for the student and the college to get to know each other better, and not as an evaluation of the student. Still, it is important for a student to make a good impression. Therefore, students should make an appointment in advance, be prompt, be dressed neatly and appropriately, and be well prepared. To get the most out of an interview, the student should research the college before the interview and bring questions based on that information and on the student's interests and needs. The student should answer questions truthfully and completely, but it's perfectly acceptable to say that he or she doesn't know the answer. The interview is also a perfect opportunity for students to talk about their academic and personal strengths.

Students may meet with an admission professional or a student interviewer. Some colleges also offer the option of interviewing with alumni of the college. If alumni interviews are available, the applicant for admission will be contacted. If a college doesn't offer an interview, don't worry. Instead, convey information the college should know in the college application materials.

Make sure your child spends enough time to determine if she or he feels comfortable in the college surroundings. After the visit, students should write a thank-you note to the interviewer(s) and tour guide(s).

If time, distance, or money precludes visits to the colleges that most interest the student, he or she might want to visit nearby colleges that may be similar. For example, visiting the main campus of a local state university will give the student a feel for large, public, residential universities. A virtual tour can also be informative, but neither option can take the place of a personal visit. Counselors highly recommend that students visit a college or university before they make the final decision to study there. Many colleges sponsor free or inexpensive visits to campus for specific students (e.g., visits for gifted athletes or prospective engineers). The student should ask the counselor or check with the college to determine if there are special visitation programs for which he or she might qualify.

### School Counselor

As the student continues to investigate college options, encourage him or her to visit the school counselor. Counselors know a great deal about specific colleges and universities. If they are unable to answer a question immediately, they have the resources to find the answer or help students locate the needed information. They can also clarify information.

### Websites

Websites offer information about admission requirements, academic courses, majors, extracurricular activities, social life, faculty, academic departments, graduation requirements, alumni, and career placement. Virtual tours of campus are helpful, but they don't substitute for actual visits to college campuses and conversations with college students and professors. Using the college's website or the admission office's email address, students can often request that information about the college be sent to them. Some colleges set up specific email addresses or online chats for current students to talk with prospective students about the college. Many colleges prefer that students apply for admission on the internet.

When exploring a college website, students shouldn't limit themselves to the admission office or prospective student pages. Many college sites offer links to a variety of *unofficial* websites: personal home pages of current students and faculty, sites set up by student organizations, and the student-run newspaper are examples of pages that can give students a more detailed and informal look at the college. Many colleges also have Facebook and Twitter accounts where students can sign up to receive information or speak to the admission office.

Also, there are many comprehensive college admission websites. These sites are designed for students and families and provide information about college selection, admission, and financial aid. Examples of comprehensive sites are:

- College is Possible: [www.collegeispossible.org](http://www.collegeispossible.org)
- College Board: [www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org)
- College View: [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)
- Hispanic Colleges and Universities: [www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities: [www.hbcuconnect.com](http://www.hbcuconnect.com)
- Jewish Student Life: [www.hillel.org](http://www.hillel.org)
- KnowHow2Go: [www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org)
- Virtual College Tours: [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com), [www.ecampustours.com](http://www.ecampustours.com)

There are many financial aid websites, some of which also include financial planning and estimators of financial need. Some examples are:

- College Savings Plan Network: [www.collegesavings.org](http://www.collegesavings.org)
- The Financial Aid Information Page: [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- Financial Aid Search Through the Web: [www.fastweb.com/financial-aid](http://www.fastweb.com/financial-aid)
- US Government Grants and Loans Benefitting Students: [www.fedmoney.org](http://www.fedmoney.org)

Students can acquire a great deal of basic information through the study of any one of a number of good college guides or reference books. These books present a snapshot of the college. However, parents or guardians and students should be cautious of publications that rate colleges and universities or their programs. Most college rating systems aren't comprehensive or objective.



## Applying to College(s)

As the junior year of high school ends, your child may have already made some decisions about colleges on the initial list. Colleges that don't fit the student's needs can be eliminated from consideration. Colleges that are especially appealing should be investigated more thoroughly.

It will be valuable to meet with the school counselor to review the information obtained and gain the counselor's perspective of the colleges on the list. However, don't expect the counselor to create the final list of schools or rank the final choices. The counselor's job is to help students make good decisions, not make the decisions.

The number of colleges to which students should apply is up to the individual student, although counselors recommend a range of between three and eight schools. These should all be schools that the student would be happy to attend. They should cover a range of selectivity and financial cost. Students should apply to at least one school to which they are sure to be accepted.

During the spring of the junior year, summer, or very early in the senior year, the student should visit the websites of the colleges to which he or she has decided to apply and determine how to apply for admission and financial aid. Most have online applications, which should be treated with the same level of professionalism as a paper application. Students should write and edit essays or responses before submitting the application online. The student and parent or guardian should review all applications to determine what actions need to be taken and to learn the deadlines for each application. Write down all of these deadline dates on the family calendar and make every attempt to complete the application ahead of schedule. Consult the school counselor throughout the college application process. He or she will see that school-generated information is forwarded to the colleges to which the student will apply, but students should follow up with counselors to ensure the information has been sent.

### Organizing the College Application

Follow these steps to help students organize their college information and applications.

1. Make and keep a separate folder or file for each college.
2. Keep notes on each college and put them in the appropriate file.
3. Use a college application checklist to record due dates for each admission or financial aid requirement (e.g., applications, transcripts, test scores, letters of recommendation, essays, interviews, or financial aid forms). Then note on the checklist the date when each requirement is completed.
4. Use a calendar that has room on which to write notes. Record due dates, college fairs, interviews, college visits, and special programs on the calendar.
5. Read promptly all information sent by the colleges. Add to the checklist the deadlines for applications, test scores, recommendations, interviews, etc.
6. Set up columns of likes and dislikes, pros and cons for the different characteristics the student has decided their ideal college must have. Take particular note of special programs and requirements. As the student decides where to apply, he or she should take into account these requirements.
7. Take time to read and think about the information provided by each college. The student's notes assist in comparing each college. Research those colleges which seem most appealing and which are a good fit.
8. Make copies of every application for admission and financial aid before submitting the application. Be sure their applications are complete before the deadlines if confirmation hasn't already been received.
9. Be efficient. Students can make their application process more standardized and organized if they use The Common Application ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)), the Universal College Application ([www.universalcollegeapp.com](http://www.universalcollegeapp.com)), or the Coalition Application ([www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)) when applying to multiple colleges that accept them.

### *Making the Application Work*

The two most important steps in completing the college admission application are also the simplest: 1) read the instructions from beginning to end before starting to fill out the form and 2) send the application so it will be received at the college by the due date. For the student, the application is like a final test. Although it's true that the greatest emphasis is placed on the courses, grades and, in some cases, the test scores, colleges want to know about the personal qualities of your student. The application, essay, and interview (if available) are the student's opportunity to profile himself or herself.

The most important concept to keep in mind when assessing admission criteria is the level of selectivity at the college in question. The more applicants a college has for each spot in its entering class, the more selective that college can be. The student should assess the selectivity of a college or university during the exploration process. This information will guide the student in targeting specific schools and in determining the number of applications to complete. Students should consult the high school counselor and college admission counselor if they have any questions about the competitiveness of their application.

### *Awaiting the Results*

After the application has been reviewed by the college or university, a number of possible responses can come back to the student.

If the student has done his or her work carefully in choosing which schools to apply to, the chances are reasonable that an acceptance letter will be forthcoming. If offered admission by more than one college, the student must weigh the choices carefully and make a final decision.

Should the student be granted conditional admission or placed on a wait list, she or he should consult with the school counselor. Conditional admission could mean that the student must meet additional requirements. The counselor can assist in evaluating the likelihood that the student might move from wait list status to admission or in appealing a decision if the student feels that his or her application hasn't been given proper consideration.

Once the student notifies a college that she or he is accepting an admission offer, notification should be sent to other colleges that also offered admission, telling them that the student won't be attending. This allows these colleges to extend their offer to another student who may be on their wait list. Under no circumstances should the student indicate an intention to enroll at more than one college.

### *Parts of the Admission Folder*

When a student applies to college, the college admission office collects a folder of information to consider as it makes a decision about the application. Parents should be aware of the parts of an applicant's folder. As one admission representative said, "Students don't apply to colleges, folders do."

# The Application Packet

The application includes basic biographical information such as birthdate and family information. Students may be asked to write essays, which are intended to acquaint the admission committee with certain student experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and writing ability. Students have the opportunity to present themselves in the best possible light.

## *Academic Record*

The most important factor in the applicant's folder is the high school academic record. Many consider the academic record to be the best indication of later college success. The program of study, specific courses, credits earned, and the grades the student received are aspects of the record that admission officers will consider in evaluating the student's transcript. Colleges pay special attention to the challenging courses the student has successfully taken. Fortunately, the student has much control over his or her academic record.

When a student's record is compared with that of his or her classmates, he or she is assigned a class ranking relative to the others in the class. Class rank is important as a means of showing admission officers the level of competition the student has encountered and how well he or she has achieved compared to the competition. Not all high schools compute class rank. Most high schools compute grade point average (GPA), which is a method of summarizing grades earned in academic subjects or all subjects. Some schools give extra weight to the GPA for honors, accelerated, Advanced Placement (AP), and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and calculate a weighted GPA. The GPA can be determined for each year and/or cumulatively (e.g., an average of the GPAs earned in grades 9, 10, and 11 would yield a cumulative GPA for grades 9 through 11.)

## *College Admission Tests*

Standardized tests (the SAT and ACT) have been the focus of much discussion in recent years. More institutions are re-evaluating the overall role of the tests in the admission process and seem to be placing less emphasis on the importance of the test results. A few colleges have decided not to require college admission tests as part of the application process. Some colleges accept academic portfolios in lieu of or in addition to standardized test results.

The colleges that require college admission tests will use the scores in several ways. First, they may look at the scores as one way of predicting a student's success in college. Second, colleges may use scores to compare students who come from similar backgrounds and schools or from different geographical areas. Finally, colleges may use test scores to help place students in appropriate courses. Students who plan to take a standardized test may improve their performance by attending classes to acquaint them with the tests, using test prep computer software, or by taking free practice tests available from the test publishers often available on the internet or at bookstores. However, the best preparation is hard work in school.

## *Letters of Recommendation*

Letters of recommendation are prepared by teachers, counselors, and other professionals who are significant in a student's academic, extracurricular, or employment experience. These letters are an important part of the admission folder. Teachers may comment on the type of contributions the student made to the class by using specific examples. The counselor may highlight strengths that would differentiate this applicant from other candidates for admission and provide an overall appraisal of the student. The employer can comment on a student's maturity and ability to manage a variety of responsibilities. The letter of recommendation allows the writer to go beyond the information requested in the general application and tell the admission committee about the student's unique qualities and characteristics.

### *Student Activities and Employment*

Although the student academic record is the primary factor in determining admission, the student's record of involvement in activities (both inside and outside of school) can be significant. Out-of-school activities such as work, Scouting, church groups, and volunteer activities shouldn't be overlooked. Many college applications request information about a student's extracurricular involvement, work or volunteer experience, and summer activities. Students who have maintained an extracurricular portfolio will be able to complete this portion of the application easily.

Membership in an organization isn't enough. The level of involvement and accomplishment in the organization is what matters. It is better for a student to be involved in one activity as a *significant contributor* to that activity than to be involved superficially in a number of organizations and activities. Some examples of being a significant contributor include serving as an officer in the Key Club, writing regularly for the school newspaper or yearbook, becoming an Eagle Scout, or being on the planning committee for a community service project or school social event.

### *The Golden Rule*

As the student finalizes the list of colleges and begins filling out the applications, follow the Golden Rule of the college admission process: *Never apply to a college that you wouldn't gladly attend if offered the choice.*

If the student researches colleges thoroughly, only applies to the ones that meet his or her needs and interests, and follows the Golden Rule of Admission, the student will improve his or her chances of gaining admission. It also sends a signal to the college that the student is sincere about attending. During the admission process, the student has certain rights and responsibilities, which are contained in a policy written by NACAC and endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Review these rights and responsibilities with your son or daughter. NACAC has developed the Statement of Principles of Good Practice, a code of conduct to guide institutions and individual counselors as they guide students through the school-to-college transition.

# The Parent and Guardian's Role in the College Admission Process

The application period can be an anxious time for students. Help them by seeing that they follow procedures and meet all deadlines. Be an active participant in the exploration process and offer guidance as your student weighs information and creates the list of schools to which he or she will apply. With your child, file all required financial aid forms by the deadline. Colleges may require one or more of the following financial aid forms:

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), required by all colleges for applicants for need-based aid and/or loans from state and federal sources. There is no charge to submit the FAFSA and you can file as early as Oct. 1.
- CSS Profile of the College Scholarship Service, required by some colleges and universities (mostly private). Check to determine whether each college requires the CSS Profile and send the Profile only to the colleges that require it. There is a fee for processing the Profile and sending it to each college. Students may be eligible for up to eight PROFILE fee waivers. For more information, visit <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>.
- The college may have its own financial aid form, which is returned directly to the college and for which there is no fee.
- Financial records as requested by the college, most often copies of the parents' or guardians' and student's federal income tax returns.

The college application process can be time consuming and detract from routine student responsibilities. Make sure that students keep up with all schoolwork and maintains good study habits during this time. Encourage patience, persistence, and good humor.

If students have applied to a range of schools, they will have a choice of schools to select from. Should a rejection be received, provide consolation and support. When good news is received, seize the time to praise and congratulate your child!