



BE MORE THAN YOU IMAGINED

College Planning Guide

Provided by the
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Counseling Center

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College Planning: How to Get Started

- **Assess your strengths, weaknesses, goals, passions, learning style, and social skills.** What is most important to you in the college search process? What do you hope to gain from the process?
- **Make some basic decisions.** Where do you want to live? Will you go to college full-time? Part-time? Do you want to attend a single-sex school, a technical college, a public or private college, a large university, a small liberal arts college, a historically black or religiously affiliated college? How important to you is the cultural/ideological diversity of the student body?
- **Enlist help.** Who do you want to assist you in this process (parents, counselors, teachers, siblings, relatives, friends)?
- **Consult references.** Look at college directories (*College Board College Handbook*, Barron's, Peterson's) and use college searches (www.collegeboard.com).
- **Talk with your teachers and your school counselor about your dreams and goals.** Discuss your plans with your parents. Ask for their advice.
- **Meet with college representatives when they visit the school.** The Counseling Center will post information on upcoming visits. Have questions ready.
- **Visit campuses every chance you get.** Take a tour, meet with an admissions representative, ask students what they think of the college.



9 Easy Ways to Start Your College Search

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/>

1 -- Pick a Baby Step, Any Baby Step

Feeling overwhelmed by the number of factors involved in choosing a college? Don't be. There are quick and easy things you can do today to start the process.

2 -- Read Your Mail

At this point, you're probably receiving tons of college brochures and maybe even a few college-recruiting emails. Reading this material will help you begin to learn about specific colleges—and it may also show you options you didn't know you had. If you haven't been contacted by a school you're interested in, go to its website and request a brochure. You can also tell schools and scholarship programs you're interested in hearing from them by signing up on StudentEdge.

3 -- Talk to Family and Friends

Get the perspective of people who have already gone. Their personal experiences can give you insight into what college is all about. Ask relatives about their alma mater or talk to college students home for the holidays.

4 -- Write Down What You Want or Need

Coed or single-sex? Public or private? Think about who you are and what you're looking for in a college. Making a list of factors will help you determine what's most important. Use your preferences to search for colleges that fit on StudentEdge.

5 -- Research Colleges

Check out a college's profile in a resource book to get all the basic information about it, such as majors and sports offered and admission requirements. Then, check out the college's website to take a virtual tour, see the courses offered, and contact students and the admissions office. Just remember, to see if you click with a school, you should visit its campus.

6 -- Make a College Wish List

List any college you'd like to attend, from the one on the beach or in the mountains to the one with the best academic reputation in your intended major, but don't forget the school nearby. At this point, don't limit yourself. Just brainstorm.

7 -- Visit a Campus

Visit a college that's close to home or one that a friend or family member already attends. It doesn't even have to be one that you're interested in attending. Visiting will help you focus your preferences and may even make you think of needs you didn't know you had. Can't get to a campus? Take a virtual tour on the school's website.

8 -- Go to a College Fair

Ask your guidance counselor if there's a college fair coming to your school or a nearby school. Once there, you can pick up catalogs, talk to representatives and other students, and feel like you're officially starting the search process.

9 -- Meet with Your School Counselor

Your counselor is drawing on years of experience and, in particular, experience sending students to colleges in which you may be interested. Meet with him or her to discuss your education and career goals, and how you can achieve them.

Factors in Admission

The National Association for College Admission Counseling conducted a survey of their members in 2005 to find out what factors affected their admission decisions.

The results below indicate the percent of institutions reporting “considerable importance” assigned to each factor.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Grades in College Prep Courses | 74% |
| Class Rank | 31% |
| Admission Tests (SAT, ACT) | 59% |
| Grades in All Courses | 54% |
| Counselor Recommendation | 17% |
| Teacher Recommendation | 17% |
| Essay | 23% |
| Interview | 9% |
| Work Experience / Activities | 8% |
| Ability to Pay | 2% |
| State Exams (Regents scores) | 7% |
| Subject Exams | 7% |
| Residence | 1% |
| Race/Ethnicity | 2% |
| Demonstrated Interest | 15% |
| Alumni Relations | 2% |



What Are Colleges Looking For?

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/>

As you prepare application materials, it can help to know what schools are really looking for in the piles of paperwork. Admissions officers evaluate applications in different ways, depending on how selective, or competitive, their college is.

The Levels of Selectivity

At one extreme are open admissions colleges. These schools require only a high school diploma and accept students on a first-come, first-served basis. Many community colleges have this policy. At the other extreme are very selective colleges. They admit only a small percentage of applicants each year. Most colleges fall somewhere in between.

Less Selective: Less selective colleges focus on whether applicants meet minimum requirements and whether there's room for more students. Acceptable grades are often the only requirement beyond an interest in college study. The SAT[®] or ACT may be required, but test scores are usually used for course placement, not admissions.

More Selective: More selective colleges consider course work, grades, test scores, recommendations, and essays. The major factor may be whether you are ready for college-level study. It's possible to be denied admission because of a weakness or a lack of interest in higher education.

Very Selective: As many as 10 or 15 students apply for each spot at very selective schools. Admissions officers look carefully at every aspect of a student's high school experience, from academic strength to test scores. Since many applicants are strong academically, other factors—such as your essay—are critical. Although they receive a great deal of publicity, only a small number of colleges (fewer than 100) are this selective.

The Campus Visit

Taking a campus tour will allow you to experience the campus **first-hand**. This is a **critical** piece of the college search process! What is the atmosphere like? Do you feel comfortable there? The impressions you gather on your campus visit will help you decide if you and the institution are a good match!

In general, the college visit usually consists of **three parts**: a student-conducted campus tour, an interview, and wandering. Each can be a valuable source of information and insight if you have done your research and are properly prepared.

The Campus Tour

Arranging a campus tour is easy. Simply call the Admission Office and ask when tours are offered. Confirm your visitation date over the phone. While arranging your tour, try to schedule time to speak with an admission counselor at the conclusion of the program. You may also want to make arrangements to sit in on classes, stay overnight, or meet with faculty members and coaches.

In addition to seeing and hearing about programs and facilities, student-conducted tours offer at least three other benefits: **first**, the opportunity to ask the guide questions on any and all subjects and get the student view; **second**, the chance to exchange information with others on the tour; and **third**, the opportunity to meet students who may be your future classmates.

Campus Considerations

Consider the following as you tour the facilities of each campus you visit:

Library

1. How extensive are the hours?
2. How extensive are the resources?
3. Are tutoring services available?

Laboratories/Studios

1. Are there sufficient computer labs?
2. Are there foreign language labs?
3. Are labs equipped with state-of-the-art technology?
4. Are there art studios, music studios, dance studios?

Theatre

1. What is the size and scope of the theatre?
2. Are productions open to non-theatre majors?
3. How many productions are scheduled each year?
4. Is there a campus repertory company, choir, band or orchestra?

Athletics

1. What intercollegiate and intramural sports are offered?
2. In what athletic division does the college participate?
3. Are athletic scholarships available?
4. What are the facilities for men and women?

Housing

1. Where are the residence halls located on campus?
2. Are rooms singles, doubles, triples or suites?
3. Are residence halls coed or single-sex?
4. Where do freshmen live?

Housing (cont'd.)

5. How are roommates selected?
6. What are the residence hall rules?
7. Are there quiet study hours?
8. Is there a visitation policy for guests?
9. Are there sufficient rooms for all interested students?
10. Can freshmen live off-campus?
11. Are there fraternity or sorority houses?
12. Is housing guaranteed for four years?

Dining

1. Where are the dining halls located?
2. Are there apartment-style dorms where students do their own cooking?
3. What types of meal plans are available?
4. Can special diets be accommodated?
5. Are there restaurants on or near the campus?

Health Services

1. Are clinical facilities available on-campus?
2. During what hours are doctors and nurses available?
3. Are counseling services available to students?
4. Is there a charge for medical care?
5. What hospitals are near the campus?

Security

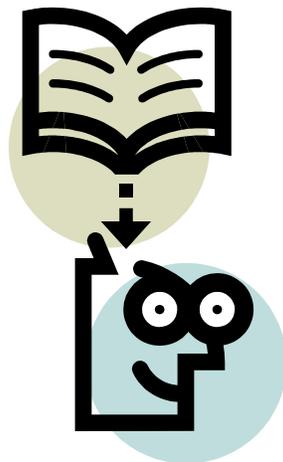
1. Is the campus patrolled by an effective security staff?
2. Are parking lots and walkways well lit?
3. What are the campus crime statistics?

Creating Your “Good Fit” List

In searching for colleges, your main goal is to find ones that are a “good fit” for you. Your list may be completely different from your best friend’s, and that’s okay!

Note: The table below is a general guideline. You don’t *need* to apply to that many schools; however, you should maintain a balanced list. That is, the majority of your applications should be sent to schools that are realistic possibilities.

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----|
| Final List of Schools | REACH (1-2 schools) | 1. |
| | | 2. |
| | REALISTIC (4-6 schools) | 1. |
| | | 2. |
| | | 3. |
| | | 4. |
| | | 5. |
| | | 6. |
| | SAFETY (1-2 schools) | 1. |
| | | 2. |



Assessing Your List of Colleges

As you develop a list of colleges that interest you, be sure you can answer these questions about them.

The basics

- Where is the college? Can you locate it on a map? Is it too close to home? Is it too far? Is it too cold or too hot there?
- Have you taken the course work the college requires for admission?
- What size is the college? How many students are undergraduates?
- What is the college's selectivity ratio? (What proportion of applicants were admitted last year?)
- Does the college offer majors that interest you?
- Is the college coed or single sex?
- What percentage of students live off campus?
- How many of the students graduate in four years? Five years? Six years?
- How many first-year students return for their sophomore year?
- How much does the program cost? What is the total per-year expense?
- What type of financial aid is available?

Would you fit in?

- What are the college scores for the SAT or ACT? Where does that place you?
- What were the high school GPAs of most of the first-year students last year?
- Are first-year students guaranteed on-campus housing? If not, where do they live?
- Are there extracurricular activities that interest you?
- Are there auditions or try-outs that you must complete first? When are they and what are they like?

Visit the colleges' websites, read the guidebooks, and look at their literature.

- What are their strong academic programs? (Ask a college representative, students, graduates, and teachers.)
- What courses are required for graduation?
- Are the courses you need/want available each semester? At convenient times?
- Are there special programs that interest you (study abroad, internships, etc.)?
- What is the social life like? What percentage of students join fraternities or sororities?
- Do the pictures and the language the college uses to describe itself attract you?
- What is your general impression of the college?
- Is the school accredited?
- If professional certification is required for employment in the field that interests you, how many students enrolled in the school's program pass the certification exam?

Admissions process

- When are applications due?
- Does the college accept the Common Application? If so, does it require supplemental forms?
- What does the application contain? Are essays required?
- Is an interview suggested or required? Is an interview available from staff or alumni?
- When may you visit the college? What is its policy regarding campus visits?
- What are the financial aid deadlines? What financial aid forms are required?

Now answer these questions:

- Am I a strong candidate for admission to this college?
- If I am not a strong candidate, what are my chances?
- Do I want to visit this college?
- What additional information do I need?

NCAA Clearinghouse Basics

FAQs about the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/prepare/athletes/clearinghouse>

**Student-athletes must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center to be eligible to play NCAA Division I or II sports in college. Athletes playing in Division III do not have to register.

What is the NCAA Eligibility Center?

The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies whether prospective college athletes are eligible to play sports at NCAA Division I or II institutions. It does this by reviewing the student-athlete's academic record, SAT or ACT scores, and amateur status to ensure conformity with NCAA rules.

What are NCAA Divisions I, II, and III?

The NCAA is the governing body of many intercollegiate sports. Each college regulated by the NCAA has established rules on eligibility, recruiting and financial aid, and falls into one of the three membership divisions (Divisions I, II and III). Divisions are based on college size and the scope of their athletic programs and scholarships.

When should students register?

The NCAA recommends that student-athletes register at the **beginning of their junior year** in high school, but many students register after their junior year. There is no registration deadline, but students must be cleared by the Eligibility Center before they receive athletic scholarships or compete at a Division I or II institution.

How do students register?

Students must register online at the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). They will have to enter personal information, answer questions about their course work and sports participation outside of high school and pay a registration fee.

Can students have the registration fee waived?

Students who have received a waiver for the SAT or ACT are eligible for a waiver of the registration fee. The student's counselor must submit confirmation of the student's test fee waiver. Go to the [NCAA Eligibility Center High School Portal](#) for more information.

What records does the Eligibility Center require?

Students should arrange to have you send their high school transcript as soon as they have completed at least six semesters of high school. The transcript must be mailed directly from their high school. They must also arrange to have their SAT or ACT test scores reported directly by the testing company to the Eligibility Center. Students can arrange this when they register for the tests.

You are responsible for sending in students' final transcripts and proof of graduation at the end of their senior year.

How often can students update their athletics participation information?

Students can update the information on the athletics participation section online as often as they want (and should update it regularly), up until the time when they request a final certification of their status. At that point — usually three to four months before enrolling in college — students must finalize their information.

What are the NCAA academic eligibility requirements?

To play sports at an NCAA Division I or II institution, the student must:

- Complete a certain number of high school core courses (defined below).
- Earn a certain minimum grade point average in these core courses.
- Earn a certain minimum score on the SAT or ACT.
- Graduate from high school.

For more information, see the NCAA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*, in the [Publications section of the NCAA website](#).

What are core courses?

This is the name that the NCAA gives to high school courses that meet certain academic criteria specified by the association. Students must complete a certain number of core courses for NCAA Division I and II eligibility.

How are high school courses classified as core courses?

All participating high schools submit lists of the courses that they offer that meet NCAA core-course criteria. If approved, the courses are added to a database that the NCAA Eligibility Center maintains. You can check this database, or view a list of approved core courses on the [NCAA Eligibility Center High School Portal](#) to see whether your student-athletes are enrolled in courses that will count toward NCAA eligibility.

It is often the counselor who provides the NCAA with the list of your school's core courses and updates it annually. The NCAA may ask for more information before approving a core course.

What are the NCAA amateurism eligibility requirements?

To play sports at an NCAA Division I or II institution, the student athlete must follow NCAA amateurism rules about receiving a salary or prize money for athletic participation, playing with a professional team and other areas. For more information, see the *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*.

Keep in mind

The best way for students to prepare for a future in college athletics is to complete the approved core courses and earn appropriate grades in them. Indeed, more students fail to qualify to play NCAA sports because of lack of appropriate course work than for low test scores.

Make sure your athletes are enrolled in the courses on your high school's core-course list, and also know the eligibility requirements of the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). Then make sure your athletes are taking the necessary courses, earning the necessary grades and doing anything else they must to stay on track for NCAA eligibility.



2018 - 2019 SAT and ACT Test Dates

Do you need to retake the SATs or ACTs? Mark your calendar and start preparing now! Please refer to the Counseling Page of Edline for information on SAT and ACT prep classes.

All students are encouraged to take the SAT twice and the ACT once

SAT

October 6, 2018
November 3, 2018
December 1, 2018
March 9, 2019
May 4, 2019
June 1, 2019

ACT

October 27, 2018
December 8, 2018
February 9, 2019
April 13, 2019
June 8, 2019

Please be aware of SAT Subject tests and the limited dates they are offered

Students are strongly encouraged to take the ACT test with Writing

Mt. Mercy Academy's high school code is:

331065

Our test center code for the SAT is:

33274

Reminder: Students planning on participating in NCAA college athletics should have their SAT and ACT test scores sent to the NCAA Clearing House (use code 9999).

Last-Minute SAT/ACT Prep

Chris Diehl -- <http://www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles>

Test day is almost here, but there's still time to study. Whether you're well-prepared, semi-prepared or not at all prepared, we have several last-minute prep strategies that can help you boost your score.

Note: SAT deducts points for incorrect answers but there is no penalty for questions left blank. The ACT does not deduct points for incorrect answers. What this means for you: On the SAT, if you don't know the answer to a question, just leave it blank. On the ACT, if you don't know the answer to a question, you are better off guessing than leaving the question blank.

Your Preparedness Level: "SAT? What SAT?"

Obviously, there's no time to take a prep course. But don't give up - you can still maximize your chances of a decent score.

- With limited time, the best way to prepare is to use an SAT or ACT review book (available at bookstores or your guidance counselor's office). These books usually have at least one sample SAT/ACT, as well as actual test questions or realistic simulations. They also provide explanations for the correct answers.
- Take a sample SAT or ACT test before you begin studying. This will give you a base score to measure your improvement against. It will also point out your strengths and weaknesses, allowing you to focus your study efforts. Take notice of the concepts, format and directions required for each section.
- Create a detailed study schedule that outlines the sections you will cover each day. Plan to review one to two sections each day. Allow at least one day prior to the test for focused review on your weakest areas (for example, sentence completion or geometry).
- Take at least two more sample tests before the actual test day. Pay attention to the types of questions you're spending the most time answering. On test day, you should consider answering those questions last. Tip: Don't spend more than four minutes on any single question.

Your Preparedness Level: Studied a Bit, but Could Use More Help

- Several days before the actual exam, take a sample SAT or ACT, and review the explanations for those questions you answered incorrectly.
- Make flashcards for common SAT/ACT vocabulary words (lists are available online at a variety of Web sites) and basic math formulas and concepts. Keep the flashcards with you and study whenever you get the chance - waiting for a red light, standing in line at stores, lunch break.
- Practice the "process of elimination." Test questions always have one to two answers that are clearly wrong. A test prep book will explain how to spot the obviously incorrect answers. If you don't know the right answer to a question, recognizing the wrong answers can improve your odds of guessing correctly.

Your Preparedness Level: Been Studying Hard

Here's how to keep up your study momentum as the big day approaches:

- Several days before the actual exam, take a sample SAT or ACT. Pay attention to the types of questions on which you spend the most time, and devise a strategy for tackling them on test day. Do you want to spend one minute solving it before moving on? Two minutes? Or do you want to skip it entirely and go back to it after you've completed the rest of the section? Figure out your strategy now - don't wait until test day.
- If you took a test prep course, review any notes you made that can help you on test day.

Before Test Day:

- Confirm the test's starting time and location. If you're not 100 percent sure where the test center is located, call and ask for directions. (Do this during the week; on the weekend, there might not be anybody answering the phone.)

The Morning of the Test:

- As a warm-up, answer about 10 questions on a practice test; it doesn't matter which section. This will help you relax and get you into the test-taking mode. DON'T try to study or cram, however - that will only stress you out more.

Good luck!

Tips for Undertaking the Application Process

Getting Started

- Set up a folder for each application. Keep all material relevant to each college in its own folder.
- If you are filing online applications, be sure to save drafts to a disk.
- Review all application materials as they arrive. Set up a schedule for completing them. Completing applications is not much fun, and you may be inclined to put off this task as long as you can. Procrastination is risky. There is a lot to do, especially if you have several essays to write. You may not do the application (and yourself) justice if you leave it until the last minute. Remember: Leave enough time for correcting and revising.
- Make two or more copies of the whole application to use as rough drafts and extras in case you make a serious error and ruin the original.

Completing the Application Process

- Review the application and its directions completely before you start to work on it.
- Be accurate, honest, and neat. Spell correctly and use correct grammar.
- Type your essay question responses in a Word Document so that you can use the Spelling and Grammar check.
- At your request, the College Board and ACT send the official records of your test scores directly to the colleges. Do not send a photocopy of your own test scores report unless requested to do so. Sometimes, a college accepts a photocopy as a means of obtaining preliminary information, but it will need the official report to make an offer of admission.
- If you are applying electronically, print a copy of the completed application before you send it. Your counselor will be happy to look it over before you push the “send” button.
- If you file an online application, be sure to tell your counselor when you have submitted the application and which materials the school needs to send to the college (such as recommendations or the transcript).

Tips for Online Applicants

- Make sure a person whose opinion you trust reviews the application for errors before you send it.
- Use standard spelling and grammar
- Have your test scores sent to the colleges to which you are applying, if you haven’t already.
- Print out a paper copy for your records.
- Do not apply electronically and send a paper copy in the mail: wait for confirmation that the electronic copy was received (you should get that within three or four days, if not sooner).
- Tell your counselor of every online application you send, so he or she can send transcripts and letters of recommendation.

College Application Checklist

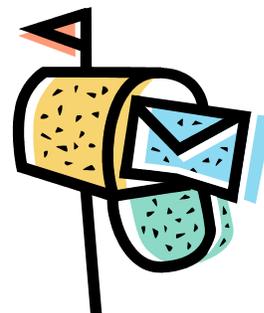
Each application that you send out will consist of most (or all) of the following components:

- ___ Online application form (Common App, SUNY App, from College Website)
- ___ High school transcripts
- ___ Test scores (SATs, ACTs)
- ___ Letters of recommendation
- ___ Essays (Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!)
- ___ Activities résumé
- ___ Interviews
- ___ Application fees
- ___ Financial aid forms (FAFSA – to be completed online at www.fafsa.ed.gov)



After you send your completed application:

- ___ Receive admission letter (YAY!!!)
- ___ Receive financial aid award letter
- ___ Send deposit
- ___ Send final transcript



MMA College Application Process

Student Responsibilities:

1. Request and follow up on two letters of recommendation from two teachers or one teacher and one coach/advisor. (Your counselor will write one for you as well, making a total of three letters of recommendation.) See Appendix B.
2. Complete and mail application with a check for the application fee. Include college essay and activities resume, if required.
3. Complete one transcript request form (see Appendix C) for each school or scholarship for which you apply. (The form must have a student signature). Please allow TWO WEEKS for your request to be processed and mailed by the Counseling Center! Plan ahead in order to meet all deadlines!
4. Complete FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Financial Aide) online (www.fafsa.ed.gov) or mail in ASAP.
5. Starting in September, explore scholarship opportunities through use of websites and by checking our monthly scholarship folders in the Counseling Center.

Counselor Responsibilities:

Mail the following:

- a. Letters of reference from counselor and teachers/coaches/advisors.
- b. Official transcript and test scores
- c. Secondary school report form
- d. School profile

****Students – Please allow a minimum of TWO WEEKS for all items to be processed and mailed!**

The Financial Aid Process

Extensive information about financial aid will be made available at Mt. Mercy's Financial Aid Night, usually held in the spring. Please plan on attending!!!

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be completed before any federal, state, or campus-based aid can be awarded. The FAFSA may be submitted no sooner than October 1st.

When visiting colleges, ask representatives about financial aid that is available from their school and the process for obtaining it.

MMA receives numerous scholarships every year! Begin checking in the Counseling Center in September for applications and information. Monthly scholarship bulletins will also be provided.

Online Resources for Students and Families

General Websites

ACT, Inc. www.actstudent.org

The website for information on the ACT, including registration, test dates, etc.

Campus Tours: Virtual College Tours www.campustours.com

Virtual tours with still pictures and descriptions, webcams, campus maps, and videos of hundreds of colleges throughout the United States. Provides a first look at colleges.

The College Board www.collegeboard.org

A complete site, with college and scholarship searches, information about the SAT, and other material pertaining to the college search and application process. Easy-to-use college search feature.

Collegiate Choice Walking Tours Videos www.collegiatechoice.com

A site run by a group of independent counselors in New Jersey who offer videos of walking tours of more than 350 colleges, providing “an unedited recording of an actual student-guided campus tour offered at that college.”

eCampusTours.com www.ecampustours.com

Virtual tours of colleges. Useful for its 360-degree views of dorm rooms and other buildings.

NCAA Clearinghouse Online www.naaclearinghouse.net

Official NCAA website that gives details of student-eligibility requirements to play NCAA sports. Watch this site for changes in eligibility; students can print the “Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete”.

U.S. Department of Education www.ed.gov

The federal government’s website is easy to use and an excellent sources of information on financial aid.

Financial Aid Websites

The College Board www.collegeboard.org

Has a scholarship search, a loan calculator, and an online application form for the CSS/Financial Aid Profile form, which is required by some colleges.

FAFSA on the Web www.fafsa.ed.gov

The website for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This form must be submitted in the senior year (after October 1 and by March 1) for families applying for need-based aid. Students may complete it electronically at this site. A PIN is required.

FastWeb www.fastweb.com

Extensive information on merit- and need-based scholarships and aid.

Cappex Scholarships: www.cappex.com/scholarships/

Student Scholarships: www.studentscholarships.org/scholarship.php

New York State Websites

New York’s Private Colleges and Universities

www.nycolleges.org

NY Mentor

www.nymentor.edu

NYS Higher Education Services Corporation

www.hesc.com

State University of New York (SUNY)

www.suny.edu

COLLEGE GUIDE BOOKS

Barron's Profiles of American Colleges

Barron's Guide to the Best, Most Popular and Most Exciting Colleges

Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Woodbury, New York

College Admission Data Handbook

Wintergreen, Orchard House, Concord, Massachusetts

College Board Book of Majors

The College Board, New York

The College Handbook Index of Majors

College Entrance Examination Board, New York, New York

College Knowledge: 101 Tips for the College-Bound Student

David Schoem, University of Michigan Press

The Fiske Guide to Colleges

Edward B. Fiske, Times Books, New York, New York

The Insider's Guide to Colleges

Yale Daily News Staff, St. Martin's Press, New York, New York

The Internet Guide For College Bound Students

Ken Hartman, College Board, New York, New York

The K & W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled

Marybeth Kravets and Imy F. Wax, Random House, New York, New York

Lovejoy's College Guide

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Terms to Know

COLLEGIATE DEGREES and PROGRAMS

- Associate Degree - The degree awarded after the successful completion of a two-year program, usually at a junior or community college.
- Bachelors Degree - The degree awarded after the successful completion of a four-year program of study at a college or university.
- 3+2 Program - A combined degree program at two cooperating institutions, the first three years at an undergraduate school and the final two years at an institution providing specialized study; degrees are awarded from both.
- Master's Degree - The degree awarded at the completion of the first post-graduate program.
- Doctoral Degree - The degree awarded after intensive study in a particular field such as Philosophy (Ph.D.), Medicine (M.D.), Education (Ed. D.) or Law (J.D.)

COLLEGIATE CALENDARS

- Semester System - The most common calendar, where the academic year is divided into two relatively equal periods of approximately 16 weeks.
- Trimester System - A calendar which divides the academic year into three equal periods.
- Quarter System - Similar to the Trimester System, but usually includes a fourth, summer session.
- 4-1-4 System - A system where students carry four courses during the fall session, one course during the "January Term" (sometimes in an off-campus situation), and four courses in the spring session.

ADMISSION PLANS

- Matriculation - Admission to a college as a degree candidate.
- Early Admission - Admission to a college following completion of the junior year of secondary school.
- Early Decision - A plan where students make application in early fall of senior year and notification is sent by mid-December; if accepted, a commitment-to-attend is usually required along with withdrawal of other college applications. A student may apply to only one college under Early Decision.
- Early Action/ Early Notification - Similar to Early Decision except that if accepted, the applicant is **not** committed to attend the institution and other applications may be made.
- Wait List/Alternate List - A response to an applicant indicating that his/her application is acceptable, but the limit of accepted students has already been reached; wait listed students may be admitted after May 1, if space becomes available.
- Rolling Admission - A procedure by which admission decisions are made on a continuous basis and sent within about 3-4 weeks after receipt of completed application material.

ADMISSION DATES

- College Notification Date - The date by which colleges not using rolling admission notify applicants of the decision on their applications, usually by April 15.
- Candidate Reply Date - The date by which applicants must reply to college offers of admission and submit a tuition deposit to secure a place in the freshman class, usually by May 1.

Terms to Know (cont'd.)

TESTING TERMINOLOGY

- **Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)** - Two-hour tests usually taken in fall of junior year in preparation for the SAT. The PSAT score serves as the basis for selection of National Merit Scholars who receive public recognition and financial awards.
- **Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT Reasoning)** - A three-hour, 45 minute test given on specific dates throughout the year at testing centers and required by most colleges for admission. The scoring has three components: 1) Evidence-Based Reading & Writing - which indicates an understanding of words, skill in dealing with word and thought relationships, the ability to read with understanding and discrimination; 2) Math- which measures ability to handle numbers and do quantitative reasoning; 3) Writing (OPTIONAL) - which indicates an understanding of grammar, usage, and word choice. Scores on each section range from 200-800.
- **SAT Subject Tests** - One-hour tests given in specific high school subjects and scored 200 - 800 to demonstrate level of accomplishment. A number of colleges may require these tests in addition to SAT Reasoning.
- **American College Test (ACT)** - A four-part test consisting of English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Natural Science used largely by midwestern, western, and southwestern colleges for admission. Individual and composite scores range from 1 to 36.
- **Advanced Placement Examination (AP)** - Subject-oriented college-level tests given in May and usually taken by high school students completing advanced placement courses; college credit usually granted based on scores (1 is low and 5 is high), enabling students to pursue further study in a field or shorten their college career.
- **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)** - An exam used in conjunction with or as a substitute for the SAT or ACT for students whose native language is not English.
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP)** - A testing program by which students can usually earn up to 30 college credits by passing a battery of tests in English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Humanities or by taking intensive subject area exams.
- **College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB)** - More commonly called the "College Board," this organization regulates the Admission Testing Program which includes the Scholastic Assessment Tests and the Advanced Placement Tests.
- **Educational Testing Service (ETS)** - This organization creates, administers, scores and reports results of the Admission Testing Program of the College Board; ATP reports are cumulative, and a student's report includes current scores and all SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject scores from up to five previous dates.
- **Secondary School Code (SSC)** - The identification number of your high school used for CEEB and ACT tests.
- **Student Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ)** - A form used by the College Board to collect information about a student's interests, aspirations and activities; the SDQ response sheet is returned when a student registers for the SAT.
- **Student Search Service (SSS)** - A program by which students' SDQ responses, PSAT, SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject scores are made available to colleges to allow them to directly contact by mail those students in which they might be interested.

What to Do About Senioritis

<http://www.collegeboard.com/parents>

Tips for Parents to Help Your Child Make Senior Year Count

High school seniors have worked hard for three years, taking tests, completing projects, and preparing for college admission. When senior year rolls around, some students just want to get through college applications and relax before they head off to the college of their choice.

Also known as senioritis, taking it easy senior year may be a nice break for your child, but is likely to do more harm than good. According to recent reports, incomplete high school preparation can contribute to academic problems in college.

As many as half of all college students do not have adequate academic preparation, and are required to take remedial courses.

More than one quarter of the freshmen at four-year colleges and nearly half of those at two-year colleges do not even make it to their sophomore year.

Not only does senioritis jeopardize your child's chances for success later on in college, it can also affect her grades—and college admission officers pay close attention to her performance senior year.

College Admission

Many students mistakenly believe that prepping for college ends after the eleventh grade. However, the senior year—the entire senior year—is actually of particular interest to colleges.

Applying

Many college applications (including the Common Application) require your child to list her senior courses, including information about course levels and credit hours. It will be very obvious to the admission officers if she has decided to take the year off.

Many colleges also include as part of the application a form called the mid-year grade report. Your child's counselor completes this form with first-half grades and sends it to the colleges. It then becomes a crucial part of the application folder.

When Your Child Is Accepted

Many college acceptance letters include warnings to students such as "Your admission is contingent on your continued successful performance." This means colleges reserve the right to deny your child admission should her senior year grades drop.

Mary Lee Hoganson, college counselor for Homewood-Flossmor Community High School, Flossmor, Illinois writes: "It is not at all rare for a college to withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of the senior year. (I have a folder full of copies of these letters.)"

Helping Your Child Through Senior Year

Senior year is your child's opportunity to strengthen her skills and broaden her experiences, in school and out, to prepare for all of the challenges ahead. With your encouragement and support, and the help of her teachers, your child's senior year will help launch her on the path to a successful future.

What to Do about Senioritis (cont'd.)

A Challenging Course Load

Your child should take the most rigorous courses available, and be sure to continue taking college-track subjects. She should consider AP[®] courses, which can also earn her credit at many colleges.

Pursuing Activities

Your child's continued involvement in activities, sports, and volunteer work will help her stay active and focused throughout her final year. In addition, a great internship or career-focused job opportunity can help motivate your child to start considering his career options. Meaningful and significant experiences will help prepare her to make informed decisions about her education and career goals.

Try Out College Early

If your child is interested in pursuing a subject further, and has excelled at her high school classes so far, she should consider taking a class at a local college. This challenge can help her avoid sliding into an academic slump, and stimulate her interest in the possibilities of college.

Another option in many areas is middle college or early college high schools. These schools, normally located on community and four-year college campuses, allow students to spend their last two years taking classes in both college and high school. Early exposure to college classes introduces students to the rigor of college work while easing their transition from high school.

Explore All the Options

Your child's continued commitment to challenge herself and grow will help her to maintain his momentum, and make smart decisions about her future. Your child should discuss all her education options with her counselor to create a plan that puts her on the right track for success—throughout her high school years and beyond.

Sources: *National Commission on the High School Senior Year, The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year: Finding a Better Way - Summary of Findings*, 2001.

Barth, P., Haycock, K., Huang, S. and Richardson, A., *Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2000.



APPENDIX A

SENIOR CHECKLIST

September

- ⌚ Discuss your course load, college plans, and test scores with your high school counselor.
- ⌚ Begin college applications.
- ⌚ Arrange campus visits.
- ⌚ Register to take the SAT/ACT, if necessary.
- ⌚ Search for scholarships and ways to pay.
- ⌚ Work on admission application essays.
- ⌚ Ask for letters of recommendation to include with your admissions and/or scholarship applications
- ⌚ Submit a CSS/PROFILE form, if required.
- ⌚ Stay organized. File copies. Update your calendar.

October

- ⌚ Verify that your transcripts are accurate.
- ⌚ Find out which financial aid applications are required at your choice colleges.
- ⌚ Attend college fairs and financial aid nights.
- ⌚ “Early decision” candidates should complete college applications (deadline is often November 1 or 15).
- ⌚ Submit your FAFSA via the Web as soon after January 1 as possible because some student aid programs award funds on a first-come, first-served basis.
- ⌚ Fill out and submit required financial aid forms. Follow instructions carefully and make copies.

November

- ⌚ Continue completing your college applications.
- ⌚ Determine which financial aid forms your choice colleges require—when in doubt contact the financial aid office.
- ⌚ Search for additional sources of student financial aid.
- ⌚ Use College Answer’s **Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Calculator** to estimate how much your family could be expected to contribute to your education.

December

- ⌚ Complete school applications ideally by December 1.
- ⌚ Print the “FAFSA on the Web Worksheet.” This form can help you gather the necessary information to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Visit <http://fafsa.ed.gov>.
- ⌚ Take SAT or Achievements, if registered.
- ⌚ Stay organized and watch deadlines.

January – February – March

- ⌚ College acceptance and financial award letters begin to arrive.
- ⌚ Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR). Carefully examine the results.
- ⌚ Don’t panic if you’re selected for verification. Just provide the college with the documents they need.
- ⌚ Stay on top of important financial aid deadlines.
- ⌚ Respond quickly to college requests for additional documentation.

April

- ⌚ Use College Answer’s **Award Analyzer** to compare the award letters you receive.
- ⌚ Make a decision, most colleges request your reply by May 1, and send your tuition deposit.
- ⌚ Register for Advanced Placement (AP) tests, if necessary.
- ⌚ Mark your calendar with important deadlines (housing, meals, transportation, financial aid, etc.).

May

- ⌚ Verify that your final transcripts have been mailed.
- ⌚ Notify other colleges of your decision not to attend.
- ⌚ Continue to search for scholarships.
- ⌚ Look for a summer job and save money for school.
- ⌚ Evaluate student loan lenders.

June

- ⌚ Save some of your graduation money for school.
- ⌚ Respond to requests from the college you will be attending. Keep copies of everything you send.
- ⌚ Read and be familiar with your college catalog and semester class schedule.
- ⌚ Talk with friends who are home from college.
- ⌚ Make travel arrangements, if necessary.
- ⌚ Send thank-you notes or postcards to those who helped you get into college.

July – August

- ⌚ If you still need money to pay for college, consider a student loan.
- ⌚ Register and attend a college orientation session.
- ⌚ Confirm housing arrangements and meal plans.
- ⌚ Finalize your college budget.
- ⌚ Notify the financial aid office of loans you will receive.
- ⌚ Consider taking out a renter’s insurance policy.
- ⌚ Return borrowed items, such as library books, rental videos and things borrowed from friends.
- ⌚ Make note of tracking numbers of boxes you are shipping to school.
- ⌚ Open a bank account near campus.
- ⌚ Review your cell phone plan to limit roaming charges.
- ⌚ Contact your roommate and coordinate what to pack.
- ⌚ Pack for college.

APPENDIX B

Request For Letter Of Recommendation

STUDENT'S NAME _____ DATE _____

COLLEGE APPLICATION DEADLINE _____

Letter of recommendation for: Major/Career Interest: _____

- COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP
 VOLUNTEER JOB

***Please request the letter at least two weeks before it is due. A thank you card should be given to the person who writes your letter of recommendation.**

School &/or Extracurricular Activities

| Activity | Years of Participation | Leadership Positions Held |
|----------|------------------------|---------------------------|
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| | | |

Work Experience

| Where | When | Responsibilities |
|-------|------|------------------|
| | | |
| | | |

Volunteer Experience (Both in school and community)

| Where | When | Responsibilities |
|-------|------|------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

What has been your biggest challenge thus far? How have you overcome this challenge?: _____

How would your friends and/or family describe you?: _____

Plans for the future: (Career and Academic Goals) _____

Any additional comments: _____
