

Dear Parkland Parents,

You, as parents, are the most important and influential people in your children's lives. You are interested and involved in every aspect of their development, their activities, their academic progress, and in the planning of their futures. Your children also need you to take an active interest in their preparation and planning for college.

A "good college" is one that is a good fit for your child; one where he/she will be comfortable enough to thrive and be able to continue academic, social and emotional development. There are hundreds of outstanding colleges in our country. Your task is to guide and support your child in this endeavor.

This booklet will give you the basic information you need to advise your children as they approach the college admission process. It is not designed to provide the answers to all questions or to address the needs of all students. For answers to individual questions, please call the Parkland High School counseling office and ask to speak to your child's counselor.

P.H.S. Counselors

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WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR

ADMISSION CRITERIA

How do you assist your child in the college application process? For starters, it is important for parents to understand what college admission officers are looking for. Colleges are interested in the information listed below when deciding whether or not to admit an applicant. Individual colleges differ in how they evaluate this information.

- Grade Point Average (GPA)**
- Transcript**
- School Profile**
- Test Scores**
- Difficulty of courses**
- SAT/ACT scores**
- Recommendations**
- Class Rank**
- Activity involvement/awards**
- Personal essays**
- Interviews**

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

A student's grade point average (GPA) is important for college admission. Students who have a high grade point average are more likely to continue to excel academically in college. A GPA is the average of a student's grades, starting with the freshman year. The higher the GPA, the greater the college and scholarship opportunities.

CLASS RANK

Class rank indicates where a student stands academically in relation to the other members of his/her graduating class. Class rank is often presented with the student's place in the class followed by the total number of students in the class (e.g., 59/561). Rank can be important when applying for scholarships because many scholarships stipulate that a student must be in the top 10% (or 20%, etc.) of his/her class.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript is a document that outlines a student's academic achievement in high school. Students receive an unofficial transcript in the spring of their junior year. Study and carefully proofread your child's high school transcript prior to having it sent to an admissions office at any college or university. A transcript contains the following information:

Courses, grades, and credits for each grade level completed (beginning with grade 9)
Current yearly and cumulative GPA and class rank
SAT (or ACT scores)
Distinctions
Activities

All applications request that an OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT be submitted with the application. An official transcript must have a signature, stamp, or seal verifying its authenticity. An unofficial transcript is the same as an official transcript except there is no official signature, stamp, or seal. You may request an UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT for personal use (e.g. to take with you on a college visit) by contacting the counseling office. Please see the Appendix Index for an example of a PHS transcript.

SCHOOL PROFILE

A Parkland High School profile is included with each transcript. Our profile includes pertinent information about our school such as the size, the percentage of students who go on to college, the average SAT scores of the previous graduating class, and course information about the high school.

COURSES RECOMMENDED FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION

Four-year colleges require students to complete certain college preparatory courses while in high school. These include a minimum of:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Social Studies
- 3 years of Math, including Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry
- 3 years of Science (Lab Sciences)
- 2-3 years of a Modern Foreign Language
- 1 year of Fine Arts

Students lacking these courses may be required to take remedial and/or additional courses at college. Students should take as much college preparatory Math, Science, English, Foreign Language, and Social Studies as they can handle academically. The more competitive colleges prefer as many Honors and Advanced Placement courses as possible.

INDIVIDUAL TESTING PROGRAM

Planning and organizing your child's testing program reduces stress and maximizes scores. The following tests may be considered:

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) The PSAT is a very important test for our students as it qualifies juniors for National Merit Scholarships and is also a practice test for the SAT. It is given each October to juniors and to many sophomores. The PSAT is divided into five sections (two Verbal, two Math and one Writing). The PSAT Score Reports, released in December, highlight academic areas that need reinforcement before taking the SAT. PSAT scores are not printed on PHS transcripts. Many 10th grade students take the PSAT for practice and as a benchmark for future testing.

SAT REASONING TEST – Although a student may take the SAT (college entrance examination) at any time, the PHS Counseling Department recommends that all college bound juniors take the SAT in the spring of their junior year. By this time students will have completed the course work needed to do their very best on

college admission tests. Students receive a critical reading, math, and writing score. Register online for the SAT at www.collegeboard.com. There are numerous CDs, computer programs and preparation courses available. The best preparation for this test is a strong, challenging course load throughout the high school years. The SAT is offered in October, November, December, January, March, May and June. Parkland High School administers the SAT in November, March, May and June. Registration deadlines are four to five weeks prior to each test date. Many of our students take the SAT two times although there is no limit (and no penalty) as to how many times a student may take a college admission test. A common practice is for colleges to combine the highest reading score with the highest math score. At this time, the writing section is generally used for placement purposes.

NOTE: The use of cell phones or any other prohibited electronic devices during a test administration will result in dismissal of the student and cancellation of test scores.

Students registering for the SAT will print out an admission ticket. The admission ticket and picture identification must be presented in order to be admitted to the test. Scores are received in three to four weeks after the test date.

Many universities require that test scores be forwarded to them directly from the testing company. Check with admission offices regarding this requirement. You may go online to request that scores be sent to colleges or you may secure a form in the counseling office to have your score reports sent directly.

ACT- (American College Test) – The ACT is a college entrance examination used widely in the South and Western part of our country. It is generally taken during the junior and/or senior year. Students receive scores in English, Reading, Math and Science Reasoning, as well as a Composite score. Many colleges will accept the SAT or the ACT. Register online for the ACT at www.actstudent.org.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS - SAT Subject Tests are one hour tests which measure a student's knowledge of specific subjects, and his/her ability to apply that knowledge. These tests are required by some but not all colleges. Generally, the more competitive colleges require applicants to take one or more of these tests for admission and/or placement. Registration and preparation materials are available online.

AP EXAM - (Advanced Placement) - The purpose of AP tests is to provide colleges with another academic assessment and to allow students an opportunity to receive college credit. There are thirty-four courses and exams across nineteen subject areas. At the end of an AP course, students have the opportunity to take the corresponding AP exam. AP tests are administered in May and should be taken as soon as possible after taking a related AP course. Colleges differ as to what score is required for granting college credit.

ASVAB- The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is available to juniors and seniors in November and April. This test gives a student self-knowledge about his/her natural aptitudes. This information can be vital in career planning.

ONGOING SUPPORT FOR YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

MONITOR ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND COURSE SELECTION

Thoughtful course selection is essential for building a solid academic background. Every spring, review your child's registration form to make sure he/she has selected the most challenging courses for the next school year. Helping choose the best courses requires an ongoing conversation with your child, one that may evolve and change as your child progresses throughout high school. An ongoing discussion about courses, career aspirations, and long-term goals is very important. Your goal should be to have a child who is involved, challenged, and achieving the best grades possible.

Be aware of when interim reports and report cards are issued and show active interest by providing encouragement and support. Our Home Access Center allows parents to track their child's daily attendance and academic performance, including marking period, interim, and report card grades. Do not assume that someone will contact you if there is a problem.

ENCOURAGE YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER TO BECOME INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

Colleges are looking for students who are active in a variety of activities, both in and out of school. Admissions officers are impressed by quality of involvement, not the number of activities. A student with significant involvement in a limited number of activities is more attractive to an admissions committee than a student who is overextended and demonstrates no depth of experience. In addition to an activities list, college applications ask for evidence of leadership. If your child has leadership potential, encourage him/her to develop this skill by assuming leadership roles in clubs and teams. Depth of involvement shows focus and commitment. Significant volunteer experience is also impressive. A student who has special talents or abilities needs to make sure that the college application reflects these abilities.

DEVELOP AN ONGOING LIST OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, HONORS, AWARDS, LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, EMPLOYMENT, VOLUNTEER WORK, COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, etc.

This will be very helpful later when your son or daughter is required to list activities on applications. It is also helpful to give this list to anyone asked to write a letter of recommendation. (See recommendation profile).

An activities profile details and documents how a student uses free time during their high school years. This includes school-based clubs and organizations and community activities. Students are not usually admitted on grades alone but on the combination of academics and activities, especially at the more competitive colleges.

PLAN MEANINGFUL SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Be aware of the excellent summer enrichment programs available on college campuses. Summer activities can give your child invaluable experiences. Consider athletic teams, courses, jobs, volunteer work, hobbies, lessons and travel.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSS JOBS, CAREERS, COLLEGE OPTIONS

As the opportunity arises, encourage your child to gather information, talk to people about their occupations, and make informal visits to colleges. Discuss your child's aptitudes, interests and abilities with him/her and look at these in terms of career options. Help your child evaluate and analyze his/her interests, strengths, and abilities. An on-line career interest survey is available to PHS students at www.careercruising.com (Username: Parkland, Password: Trojans). The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is an excellent career assessment tool available to juniors and seniors during the months of September and April.

LOOKING AT COLLEGE OPTIONS

TYPES OF COLLEGES

What is important to your son/daughter when selecting a college? There are several types of post-secondary schools.

TWO YEAR COLLEGES AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

We encourage all students to pursue post high school education/training. Community colleges, technical schools, and junior colleges are examples of two year colleges. Only about 20% of today's careers require a four year college degree. In many cases, students can prepare for today's high demand career fields by attending a community college or technical school. Many of these schools do not require that a student have a college preparatory background, nor do they require SAT testing. Students may begin their education at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college to complete their bachelor's degree.

There are advantages of attending a two year college. Many are reasonably priced, especially community colleges. Classes are generally smaller and are often taught by individuals who have worked in a related career field.

FOUR YEAR COLLEGES

Public colleges usually are larger than private and offer more majors. They are subsidized by tax money so they are less expensive than private schools. Private colleges often have smaller student to teacher ratios and may have a more personal atmosphere. Entrance requirements vary widely among four year colleges.

COLLEGE RATINGS AND RANKINGS

How do you determine a quality school? Be careful when looking at college rankings. The criteria used for rankings may not match your own and may be of little use to you in selecting a college. A school may be ranked high on one list and not even appear on another list.

THE MASTER LIST

There are over 3,000 colleges and universities in this country and the task of compiling and narrowing the list of potential colleges can be overwhelming. As you start this process, consider the following:

LOCATION	SIZE
COST	FACILITIES
AVAILABLE MAJORS	REPUTATION
COMPETITIVENESS	COMMUNITY
SPORTS ACTIVITIES	URBAN OR RURAL
	PROGRAMS (CO-OP and INTERNSHIPS)

After you have assisted your child to determine his priorities, it is time to search for the schools that meet your criteria. We have excellent reference books available in our library and counseling office. A wealth of information is available in bookstores and on the internet. Call admissions offices and ask to be placed on mailing lists so you will receive information pertaining to visitation days and upcoming events. Visitations, preview days, or open houses can be informative as they are held specifically for prospective students. They may provide opportunities to visit a class, tour the campus, and give information on specific majors and financial aid. You may also call to schedule an individual appointment, especially if there is something on your child's academic record you would like to explain or discuss. Take an unofficial transcript with you.

COLLEGE VISITS

*A note to parents on college visits.....Parents are welcome and encouraged to go on college visitations. Your questions may be different than your child's. There are some areas in which your child may benefit more from experiencing alone such as interviewing, visiting classes, and spending the night on campus. Let them have some space so they can get a feel for the campus.

To make the most of a college visit, make sure you do the following:

- 1. Research the college before visiting; have a list of questions.**
- 2. Take a tour. Every campus has a personality. How do the students look? What is the atmosphere? Talk to students and ask their opinion of the school.**

3. **Attend information sessions for parents and students.**
4. **Ask to see facilities for the major your child is considering. Talk to someone who is in the same program.**
5. **Does the college have a placement office?**
6. **Does the college have an honors program? What unique opportunities does the school have for qualified students?**
7. **Ask to see a dorm room. Eat in the cafeteria. Visit the student union, and the library. What do the students do on weekends?**
8. **Inquire about any program of interest to your child (LD support, tutoring, musical activities, sports).**
9. **Make an appointment with a financial aid counselor. Inquire about scholarship opportunities.**
10. **Parent concerns to address may include: campus safety; the practice of teaching assistants teaching classes/labs in place of professors; the possibility for a student to complete their program in four years; the percentage of returning students; the average GPA for entering students; and the cost of the college.**
11. **Drive around town to become familiar with the area. Do students feel comfortable in the atmosphere?**

INTERVIEWS

Some campuses offer the opportunity for students to interview, either at the college or with a visiting college representative or a local alumnus. Many schools regard the interview as an optional activity. Many interviews are informational and do not weigh heavily in the admission decision. Some competitive schools use interviews to evaluate candidates and the evaluator's impressions are regarded as part of the application.

A student should be prepared to answer questions about academic history, interests, school and community activities, etc. The interview is a good time to address issues that you would like the college to know about. Be prepared to discuss why you are interested in attending that particular school. Questions will generally be straight-forward. A student may want to expand on the answers to questions.

QUESTIONS A STUDENT MAY BE ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW:

How did you become interested in this school?

What are your criteria for choosing a college?

What courses have you taken that you enjoyed, and why?

What do you plan to contribute to our campus?

How do you plan to spend your free time?

Have you worked up to your potential in high school?

What is your biggest achievement to date?

List some words that describe you.

What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses?

What books or magazines have you read recently?

What current events are of most interest to you?

What is the most difficult situation you've faced?

Is there anything of special interest to you that you would like to talk about?

What do you plan to do after you graduate from college?

A prospective student should be prepared with some questions of their own or ask for clarification about things they have seen, heard, or read. This is a good way to demonstrate a student's level of curiosity and understanding.

THE APPLICATION

COLLEGE ESSAYS

The essay is a chance for students to share what is meaningful, important, unique, or challenging in their lives. It gives applicants an opportunity to make a connection between the other aspects of the application. It is the one place in the application where students get to be themselves, represent how they think and explain whatever needs explaining. The essay questions may be an important factor in the admissions committee's decision. Colleges will usually ask two types of questions: open-ended questions and analytical questions. The options for a topic may be very broad or exceptionally specific. Many questions are autobiographical in nature. The essay is judged by the content, by a student's use of English and on their ability to express themselves. After a first draft is completed the essay should be discussed with an English teacher or counselor. Essays should be answered honestly and sincerely. Good Advice: be yourself; use natural language; don't use gimmicks, exaggerate, get too personal, brag, or give excuses.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Students need to pay close attention to the question that asks, "Why do you want to come here?" This is the opportunity for a student to show why he or she is a great fit for the school.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

It is important for students to contact teachers early as teachers write letters of recommendation on a first-come-first-served basis. The most valuable letters share specific anecdotes that reveal a student's character. At least one letter should be from a teacher in whose class your child excelled. Don't rule out a teacher who witnessed your child develop and mature academically. This teacher can praise a student's work ethic; determination, perseverance and unwillingness to give-up.

COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE

Action Plan for Freshman and Sophomores

- All freshman and sophomore courses, grades and credits will be included on a high school transcript and will be used to calculate grade point averages. Academics are important! Activities, awards and honors will be listed on college and scholarship applications. Students need to explore and become involved in meaningful activities, develop good study habits and a strong work ethic.
- Sophomores may benefit from taking the PSAT as the scores will be a benchmark for future progress. The score report identifies areas that may need reinforcement.

Action Plan for Juniors

Fall

- SAT Prep courses are available at Parkland High School, local college campuses and other private organizations. Review materials are also available online. Students may find test review helpful in preparing for their first SAT in the spring of their junior year.
- Juniors need to plan their college admissions testing schedule. The College Board recommends juniors begin SAT testing in the spring of their junior year. Parkland High School is a SAT test center in November, March, May and June. SAT Subject Tests are also offered in May and June. Students need to research if SAT Subject Tests are required for admission to the colleges to which they are planning to apply. Most four year schools require the SAT Reasoning Test for admission.

Spring

- Register early for the SAT(www.collegeboard.com) so you can test at the test center of your choice. Waiting too long to register may mean that you will be assigned to the nearest open test center.

- **Prep courses are available at Parkland High School, local college campuses, and other private organizations. Review materials are also available online.**
- **Register for AP (Advanced Placement) exams in the Counseling Office during the month of March. Exams are scheduled for the first two weeks in May.**
- **Continue to prepare and prep for the SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject Tests scheduled for the spring.**
- **Take the SAT. Many students take the SAT more than one time.**
- **High school counselors conduct junior seminar meetings with all juniors.**
- **Explore college options. Develop a short list of schools that interest you. Start visiting schools on that list. Check the individual school websites for special junior open house dates.**
- **Plan senior courses. Senior courses and grades are more important than ever. After you are sure that your graduation requirements have been met, you should then consider course requirements of the colleges you may apply to. Some seniors may desire to “take it easy” but colleges are looking for students who continue to take a strong and challenging course load. Senior courses are listed on the high school transcript.**
- **Plan for summer activities such as volunteering, working part-time jobs, taking college courses, etc.**

Summer

- **Continue to visit colleges and adjust your list accordingly. Take campus tours and schedule interviews with admission counselors. As the list is refined, divide the college choices into three categories: REACH schools, REALISTIC schools, and SAFETY schools. A good resource is www.collegedata.com for determining these schools.**

Action Plan for Seniors

Fall

- Re-evaluate and regroup. Refine your list of colleges and the information you have.
- Review your testing schedule and scores to determine if you need to take the SAT another time. Some seniors take the SAT for the first time in October or November. SAT Prep courses are available at Parkland High School in the fall, at local college campuses, and at other private organizations.
- Create a master calendar and list that includes the following:
 - College application due dates
 - Required financial aid applications and their deadlines
 - Recommendations, transcripts and other necessary materials
 - High School deadlines for application requests, such as your transcript
 - Test dates, fees, and deadlines
- Ask teachers for recommendations. Colleges prefer teachers who have seen a full year's worth of academic work. Teachers of seniors may find it difficult to evaluate a student's performance based on a few weeks of academic work.
- Start to compose your college essay(s). Ask teachers, parents and friends to read the first draft. Our Transitional Coordinator, Mr. Roberts, will review the college essay process in all senior English classes and encourage all students to utilize the resources available in the College and Career Resource Room. Our Transitional Coordinator is available to meet with students and their parents to discuss college plans.
- College Fairs will be held at Lehigh Carbon Community College and the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia during the month of October. College representatives visit Parkland High School throughout the school year. S
- tudents are encouraged to meet with admissions counselors of perspective schools. Students need to obtain a pass from the counseling office to meet with a college representative.
- Early action or early decision applications may be due as early as November 1 – plan accordingly.

NOTE: Colleges will send a mid-year grade report form to submit to the counseling office. If no form is required, remember to notify the counseling office that a mid-year senior transcript needs to be sent. A final senior transcript, including end of the year grades, will be sent to the school you select.

- Complete the CSS/Financial Aid Profile if required by your schools. Attend the Financial Aid Night Program at Parkland High School scheduled for the month of November.
- Applications for colleges with rolling admissions deadlines should be completed as soon as possible in the fall of the senior year. Other applications may have specific deadline dates, usually somewhere between January 1 and February 15. The Parkland High School Counseling Office requires ten school days to process a college application. Please keep this timeline in mind when reviewing deadline dates.

Winter

- FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid) can be filed after January 1. Many college financial aid deadlines fall in February. Be sure to apply online by the priority date. Keep copies of everything you send to the schools.
- Some colleges may request mid-year grade reports. Strong first and second marking period senior grades can strengthen a college application.

Spring

- Registration for AP (Advanced Placement) exams takes place in March. Exams are scheduled for the first two weeks in May.
- Acceptance letters (or denial of admission letters) and financial aid offers should be received shortly after April 1. Compare awards from different colleges and talk to financial aid officers if you need additional aid. Additional funds may be available from other sources.
- If you haven't already done so, be sure to visit the college you are planning to attend for the next four years before accepting.
- Students must notify every college of acceptance or rejection by May 1. Some deadlines are earlier. A deposit may need to be sent to the college you choose.
- Many colleges require students to take English, math, and possibly science placement tests before registering for freshman courses. Contact the college you are attending to make arrangements for placement testing.

Summer

- Final transcripts are sent to colleges in June.
- Take placement tests and register for classes! Make sure to find out who your advisor will be and contact him or her. You are on your way!

PARKLAND HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Parkland High School processes thousands of college applications each school year. In the past, all parts of an application were submitted to the counseling office for processing. However, colleges now offer various options for submitting application information. Some colleges accept applications electronically, on disc format, or during a visit, as well as the traditional paper application. Therefore, it is necessary for the high school counseling office to be aware of the method students are using to submit their applications. The following guidelines should be used in the college application process.

1. A transcript release form must be on file for all students. This is a form that the student and the parent (if the student is under 18 years of age) must sign allowing Parkland High School to release official academic information to colleges.
2. Students must allow at least ten school days for processing information. Please pay particular attention to deadlines.
3. Students will bring their requests to the secretary in the counseling office. The secretary will complete a check list of materials received and any special instructions. Each college has specific requirements for processing applications. Students must carefully review what the college is requesting. If a college requires students to submit all application materials together, the student must include all parts of the application together when submitting their request.
4. Students have the option of submitting the application independently and requesting that Parkland High School send an official transcript and any additional materials the counselor needs to complete. This may include a secondary school report, a mid-year school report, and/or a counselor recommendation form. If a college requests a counselor recommendation, the student will complete a recommendation profile when submitting their request.
5. Many colleges will require students to submit teacher recommendations. When a student is asking a teacher to write him/her a recommendation, the student must supply the teacher with a stamped envelope(s) addressed to the institution(s) and any recommendation forms that may be provided by the college. This should be done well in advance of deadlines. We suggest that students provide teachers

with a profile to assist the teacher in writing the best recommendation possible. Teacher recommendations are not processed through the counseling office.

Note: Scholarship applications are handled in the same manner.

ADMISSION OPTIONS

EARLY ACTION

Schools that offer EARLY ACTION admissions are willing to notify candidates of acceptance earlier than the usual date. Deadlines vary from school to school but are usually in the fall of the senior year. Students may still apply to other schools.

EARLY DECISION

If a student is positive he/she wants to attend a certain school, an option is the EARLY DECISION PLAN. The deadline for the application is early fall, usually no later than November 15. All testing must be completed before the fall of the senior year. Under early decision, a student agrees that if he is offered admission to the college, he will withdraw any other applications and attend that college. Once accepted by early decision, the student is finished with the entire application process. If a student is not accepted under early decision, his/her application is reconsidered without bias under the college's regular admissions plan.

REGULAR DECISION

Colleges with fixed deadlines and notification dates may have several admissions plans. Under regular decision, most application deadlines occur between January 1 and February 1. Notification of admission will be on or around April 1. The student usually has until May 1 to commit.

ROLLING ADMISSIONS

ROLLING ADMISSION schools process applications as they arrive and usually notify students within six weeks of receiving the application. This admission option is most common at public universities. Applications need to be submitted early to maximize chances of admission.

OPEN ADMISSIONS

OPEN ADMISSION schools accept almost every student who has a high school degree without regard to test scores, grade average or class rank.

SELECTIVE ADMISSION CATEGORY

The specific requirements vary from school to school and may be rigorous but most students can expect to be admitted if they meet the admission requirements. Most four-year colleges classify themselves as selective.

COMPETITIVE ADMISSION CATEGORY

Even though a student may meet the specific admissions requirements, he/she cannot be sure of admission to a competitive college because more students qualify than can be admitted. Each applicant will be competing with other equally qualified applicants. The more competitive the college, the more likely it is to consider personal qualifications like special skills or abilities, leadership capabilities, and community involvement.

Some colleges require an applicant to write an essay as part of the application. The college application answers questions about course work, grades, test scores, work, activities, honors and awards. The only place the admissions officer can find out how a student thinks or feels about life is in the essay. This essay can be the deciding factor in an acceptance and its importance should not be underestimated. Time and energy should be devoted to this undertaking to do it well. A student should write about what he/she knows and not try to impress the reader by trying to sound “smart” or “highly intelligent”.

Eventually, you and your son or daughter must evaluate options and select a college. Once the decision has been made, complete the required forms and notify the other colleges. Be sure to submit any required housing deposit before the deadline if your child is planning to live on campus.

OTHER ADMISSION TERMS

COMMON APPLICATION

The **COMMON APPLICATION** is a single application accepted by more than 300 schools. The common application is accessible at www.commonapp.org.

DEFERRED

When a student's early action or early decision application is neither accepted nor denied but considered with the regular decision applications for an April reply.

WAITLIST

A student who is placed on the waitlist will not know his/her status until after May 1. If your child is waitlisted and does want to attend the school in question, be sure to fill out the school's wait list form and send it back immediately.

COLLEGE AND YOUR FINANCES

Just about everyone is interested in information on financial aid. Don't assume that you cannot afford a particular college or university until you have investigated all aspects of financial aid.

There are two basic categories of financial aid, *merit-based* and *need-based*. *Merit-based* is generally given in recognition of special skills, talents and/or academic ability. These include: merit scholars, top ten percent of the class, outstanding athlete, accomplished musician, etc. The second category, need-based, represents the major portion of help available for post-secondary education. *Need-based* (commonly called financial need) is the difference between what it will cost to attend the post-secondary institution and what the family will be able to pay (expected family contribution). There are basically four categories of financial aid:

GRANTS - money given to the student, usually because of financial need

SCHOLARSHIPS - money awarded because of academic achievement, outstanding talent or skill, and/or financial need

WORK STUDY - money the student earns through a job on campus

LOANS - money that must be paid back

Grants and scholarships are free money that do not have to be paid back. Loans and work study jobs are considered self help. It makes sense to apply for grants and scholarships before taking out loans. A college will put together a financial aid "package". This package is a combination of grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work study. A package varies from college to college so it is important to compare financial aid packages.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

There are two financial aid forms that you need to be aware of: the FAFSA (Free Application of Free Student Aid) and the College Profile, required by some colleges and universities.

The FAFSA must be completed by all students interested in obtaining financial aid. This form will be mailed to every senior who has taken the SAT in the spring of their junior year. The form will arrive in December of the senior year and cannot be filed prior to January 1. It is recommended that families complete their income tax form before completing the FAFSA as much of the same information will be needed. Approximately 3-10 weeks after you have mailed your FAFSA, you will receive a SAR (student aid report) which will inform you of your EFC (estimated family contribution). This is the amount they have determined you can afford to pay for your son or daughter's education that year. If the cost of the college is more than your EFC, you have a financial need and should be eligible for financial aid. This aid may come in the form of grants and/or loans.

In addition to the FAFSA, some private colleges require submission of the CSS/Financial Aid Profile. The Profile is a supplemental need analysis document used to determine eligibility for private, non-federal funds. The Profile requires a registration fee and an additional fee for information sent to each college. We recommend that this form be completed only when required by a school.

Financial Aid Workshops are available each year through the local community college and special workshops are sponsored by the Morning Call. These are generally held December through February.

Complete the FAFSA as early as possible, even if you feel you will not qualify for any need based aid because of your income. Colleges verify that students are not eligible for federal or state aid before they award institutional and/or private funds. Some loan programs require the FAFSA. Make a copy of your FAFSA before you submit it. Also keep a copy of your income tax return forms. The FAFSA must be completed in order to be eligible for a federal PELL GRANT.

Parents and students often find that they must take out a loan to finance educational expenses. Lending institutions provide Stafford loans to students and PLUS loans to parents. Repayment of a Stafford loan begins after the student has graduated. The Subsidized Stafford Loan is for students with financial need and the unsubsidized Stafford Loan is for students without financial need. (The government pays the interest on the Subsidized Stafford Loan). PLUS loans are not based on financial need and repayment begins within 60 days of graduation.

Other ways to finance a college education include co-op programs and military programs. Money can be saved by attending a local community college and then transferring to a four-year college after one or two years. Not all students live on campus but commute to college, saving room and board expenses.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship money sometimes goes unclaimed because many scholarships have very specific eligibility criteria. Academic scholarships generally require a 3.5 GPA or better, high SAT scores, excellent recommendations, and high involvement in extracurricular and community activities. Athletic scholarships or special talent scholarships go to the student who has demonstrated outstanding abilities.

When looking for scholarships, consider the following:

- **Start looking for scholarships during your child's junior year.**
- **Contact the financial aid office when applying to colleges to learn about scholarship opportunities.**
- **Apply for local scholarships. The Career and Counseling Resource Room has an area devoted to scholarship opportunities.**
- **Scholarship deadlines are not flexible. Some scholarship applications are due soon after being publicized.**
- **Scholarship opportunities are often overlooked. Be sure to check with your place of employment, your church, and other organizations that you or your family are associated with to see what scholarship opportunities they offer.**
- **The Career Resource Room and high school library have books and computer programs which list scholarship opportunities. The internet can also provide scholarship possibilities.**
- **Check to see if financial aid and scholarships are renewable.**

COLLEGE, CAREER AND FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES

American College Test: <http://www.act.org>

In addition to ACT information, this site has an excellent college research program.

Campus Tours: <http://www.campustours.com>

Virtual tours to campuses throughout the country using interactive maps, movies/video, and pictures.

College Board On-Line: <http://www.collegeboard.org>

SAT test date information, detailed college searches, enrollment information, financial aid services and a career search that matches interests and abilities. Site for career search: <http://www.collegeboard.org/career/html/searchQues.html>

<http://www.Collegeconfidential.com>

Threads about every possible college topic.

College Town USA: <http://www.collegetownusa.com>

This site has sections on choosing, getting into, paying for, and thriving at College. Guaranteed to be a “Student Heaven” site.

College is Possible: <http://www.collegeispossible.com>

A resource guide for students and parents, which includes information on preparing for college, choosing the right college and paying for college.

College Link/ECT, Inc.: <http://www.collegelink.com>

A computerized college application program. Applications prepared using College Link are welcomed at more than 750 leading colleges and universities.

College Net: <http://www.collegenet.com>

A searchable database of colleges, scholarship opportunities and academic resources. Offers a comprehensive college/university index with excellent graphics and on-line applications to selected schools.

<http://www.CollegesThatChangeLives.com>

Excellent lesser known schools and information about free panel presentations and college fairs.

College View: <http://www.collegeview.com>

By combining a database of 3,300 two and four colleges with multimedia tours, it gives students and parents a general overview of a college, plus a direct e-mail option for requesting additional information. Also includes information on scholarships and financial aid.

Common Application: <http://www.commonapp.org>
Download the Common Application or submit the application electronically.

Community Colleges: <http://www.mcli.dist.caricopa.edu/cc/search.html>
A web site listing community colleges throughout the United States.

Embark: <http://www.embark.com>
Provides useful advice and information on researching, applying and going to college. Includes information on undergraduate, business, international and business schools.

Ivy League Universities: <http://www.miskatonic.net/university/ivy.html>
A guide to the eight Ivy League Universities.

NIEP College Preview: <http://www.niep.com>
Brings high school students to college campuses around the country and teaches students how to evaluate colleges of differing size, cost and reputation.

Peterson's Guide: <http://www.petersons.com/ugrad>
Comprehensive college search engine.

Princeton Review: <http://www.review.com>
An excellent search engine, which also features student profile, college matching service, and comparative analysis between schools.

<http://www.TheU.com>
Download student-produced campus life videos.

Think College-Learn for a Lifetime: <http://www.ed.gov/thinkcollege>
It's never too early or too late to "Think College." A large database of information to help you get started regardless if you are a middle school student, a high school student or a returning to school adult.

US News and World Report: <http://www.usnews.com>
College rankings, advice on college search engine and college links.

CAREER INFORMATION WEBSITES

A Career Investigation: <http://www.bcpl.net/~sullivan/modules/career>

An excellent teacher resource on assisting students to do research in the process of career investigation.

Career Development Process: Internet Resources:

<http://www.sirius.com/~kimba/career.html> A wealth of resources for anyone searching for information on vocational guidance. Includes various individual assessment tools.

Career Net: <http://www.careers.org>

An excellent resource for career exploration.

Career Path: <http://www.careerpath.com>

Find a job, post your resume, and manage your career.

Career Planner: <http://www.careerplanner.com>

Provides career planning and counseling as well as career assessment and testing to help students identify and search for their ideal career.

Career Web: <http://www.cweb.com>

Job listings, steps to finding a job and online resumes.

Mapping Your Future: <http://www.mapping-your-future.org>

Provides information on planning a career and selecting a school.

Military Career Guide on Line: <http://www.militarycareers.com>

Lists hundreds of occupations from which to choose through the US Military. The leading career information source for the military world of work.

Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/ocohome.htm>

A nationally recognized source of career information, designed to provide valuable assistance to people making decisions about their future work lives.

Office of Postsecondary Education: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/ope>

A government run service. An excellent link to many career and education sites.

O*NET: <http://online.onecenter.org>

Quintessential Careers: <http://www.quintcareers.com>

A collection of comprehensive sites geared to women, minorities, teens and recent grads. Includes such features as tests and quizzes for job seekers.

The Work Site: <http://www.theworksite.com>

An impressive site for students, entrepreneurs, recent college grads - empowering the job seeker and making the Internet work for you through a wide range of resources.

US News College and Career Sites: <http://www.usnews.com>

Career information is only one part of this site's offerings.

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION WEBSITES

American Express University: <http://www.americanexpress.com/student>

Financial services sponsored by American Express.

American Student Assistance: <http://www.amsa.com>

A provider of products and services leading to financing higher education.

FastWeb: www.fastweb.com

Sign up to receive scholarship alerts.

Financial Aid: <http://www.finaid.org>

A comprehensive student guide to financial aid Over 180,000 scholarships, info on federal student aid programs and a scholarship scam alert.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

Interactive web version of the FAFSA. Includes help and frequently asked questions.

Nellie Mae: <http://www.nelliemae.org>

A national link for information on loans, financing and services.

PA Higher Education Assistance Agency: <http://www.pheaa.org>

A PA agency to help make sure that higher education is affordable for students and their families.

PA Tuition Account Program: <http://www.patap.org>

A means of saving for college expenses.

Sallie Mae: <http://www.salliemae.com>

Listing of financial aid services as well as scholarship information Tells you about the lending process, potential lenders and borrowing responsibility.

Saving For College: <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>

Student Financial Assistance: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Students>
Provides general information about the major student aid programs (who is eligible and how to apply), tax credits for education expenses, and other federal, state, and private sources of information.

US Government: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/express.html>
A starting point for information on the FAFSA, including downloading the FAFSA to complete on your computer or paper.

US News and World Report: <http://www.usnews.com>
Good search engine for financial aid.

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION WEBSITES

Scholarship Research Network Express: <http://www.srnexpress.com>
A search engine and database for scholarships. Also include valuable information on financial aid.

Scholarship Scams (How to Avoid): <http://www.ftc.gov>
A consumer protection site by the federal trade commission.

Scholarships: <http://www.scholarships.com>
Provides the opportunity to begin a free college scholarship search by creating a personal profile consisting of your interests, skills and background. This site also provides information on college loans and grants.

COLLEGE INFORMATION

RESOURCES WITH OBJECTIVE DATA AND INFORMATION:

Barrons Profiles of American Colleges/ 27th Edition
Cass & Birnbaum's Guide to American Colleges/Harper Collins
The College Handbook/College Board
Lovejoy's College Guide/Macmillan
Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges/Petersons
America's Black & Tribal Colleges by J. Wilson Bowman
Four Year College Admissions Index of Majors & Sports/ Orchard House

RESOURCES WITH SUBJECTIVE EVALUATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS:

The Insider's Guide to the Colleges/St. Martin's Griffin
The Multicultural Student's Guide to Colleges by Robert Mitchell

RESOURCES WITH COLLEGE RANKINGS AND RATINGS:

Barron's Top 50: An Inside Look at America's Best Colleges by Fischgrund

The Fiske Guide to Colleges by Edward B. Fiske

The Gourman Report by Jack Gourman

The 100 Best Colleges for African-American Students by Wilson

Peterson's Competitive Colleges/Petersons

Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges by Frederick Rugg

SAT AND ACT PREPARATION GUIDES

ACT.The Classic Course; Kaplan Sourcebooks/Bantam

Barrons How To Prepare For the SAT /24th Edition

Official Guide to the ACT Assessment/HBJ

Cracking the ACT/Princeton Review

Kaplan SAT Classic Course/Bantam Doubleday Dell

8 Real SATs/College Board

Up Your Score (SAT)/Workman Publishing

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

Paying Less for College/Petersons

Don't Miss Out/Octameron

The A's and B's of Academic Scholarships/Octameron

The Scholarship Book by Daniel Cassidy

The Financial Aid Book/Perpetual Press

The Black Student's Guide to Scholarships/Barry Beckham

The Complete Scholarship Book/Student Services, Inc.

Money Book for Women and Minorities/Young & Young

APPENDIX INDEX

APPLICATION CHECK-IN FORM

Form used when applications are submitted to counseling office

Student Name _____

Today's Date _____

Parent Release Form on file _____

Applications you are submitting today	Due date of Application	Application Fee attached
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Recommendation Profile _____

If there are any special instructions for the counselor, please list below.

RECOMMENDATION PROFILE FOR _____

In order for your counselor to be specific in writing your recommendation, please complete this form and return it to the counseling office.

- 1. List the colleges to which you are applying in order of preference. Also list the deadline date for each school.**

School	Due Date

- 2. Explain why your first choice is your first choice.**
- 3. What is your intended major and why have you chosen this major?**
- 4. Discuss your future plans.**
- 5. List and discuss those achievements of which you are most proud.**
- 6. List your extracurricular activities and any offices held. Please include any notable contributions you have made to these organizations.**
- 7. Describe any work experience and/or volunteer work.**
- 8. Share any other information that will enable me to provide you with the strongest commendation possible.**