

JUNIOR YEAR

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ROADMAP

**A GUIDE FOR THE COLLEGE-
BOUND TRAVELER**

TYPES OF COLLEGES

College: An institution that offers educational instruction beyond the high school level in a two-year or four-year program

University: An academic organization which grants undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields and which supports at least two degree granting professional schools that are not exclusively technological (such as medicine, journalism, or agriculture)

Liberal Art College: Four year institution which emphasizes a program of broad undergraduate education. Preprofessional or professional training may be available but is not stressed.

Junior College: Two year institutions of higher learning which provide vocational training and academic curricula (terminal and transfer)

Terminal Course: academic program is complete in itself. A student who completes it **may not** apply to a four year college for further study without completing additional course requirements.

Transfer Course: academic program is designed to lead into a four-year program at another college or university.

Community College: Two year public institution offering similar programs as junior colleges.

Engineering or Technical College: Independent professional schools which provide four-year training programs in the fields of engineering and the physical sciences. They are often known as Institutes of technology or Polytechnic institutes.

Technical School: A two-year institution which offers terminal occupational programs intended to prepare students for immediate employment in fields related to engineering and the physical sciences. These schools may also offer one year certificate programs in certain crafts and clerical skills.

Nursing School: There are two kinds of nursing schools. At schools affiliated with hospitals, students receive R.N. degrees upon completion of their training. At schools affiliated with two-year or four-year colleges, students receive both an A.A. or a B.S. degree and a R.N. and have possibilities of entering the field of nursing administration.

Military School: federal military academies prepare officers for the Army, Coast Guard, Navy, Marines, and Air Force. These institutions (West Point, Coast Guard, Naval, and Air Force Academies) require recommendation and appointment by members of congress. Private and state supported military institutes, however, operate on a college application basis. They all offer degree programs in engineering and technology with concentrations in various aspects of military science.

BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT COLLEGE YOU WILL WANT TO ASK YOURSELF AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR FAMILY:

Regarding Location:

- Do I want to stay near home or do I want to travel several times a year?
- What kinds of weather do I really like?
- Do I want a serene rural campus, or do I like the fast pace of the city?
- Are mountains for skiing or beaches for swimming and surfing important?

About the student body:

- Do I want a co-ed environment or do I want a women's college
- Do I want a few hundred classmates or do I want to be surrounded by thousands of students?
- Do I want a diverse student body: economically, racially, culturally, and politically?

Regarding Academics:

- How do I compare to the profile of the average student at a college I am considering?
- Do I want an academic environment that is very demanding, or would I prefer a school where I can succeed without great pressure?
- Do I expect to go to graduate school?
- Do I have the academic record to be seriously considered by a most competitive college?

Concerning Structure:

- Do I prefer a large university with many schools and colleges and many graduate students to a small liberal arts setting?
- Do I want a curriculum with much independent study and few requirements, or do I work better with clear and definite guidelines?
- Do my academic interests require specialized facilities?

On campus Life:

- Do I want to live in a dorm or off campus?
- Can I have a car on campus?
- Am I interested in fraternities or sororities?
- Do I want a very active campus or will I thrive best in a more leisurely atmosphere?
- How important are intramural and intercollegiate athletic programs to me?
- Do I abhor regulations and restrictions, or do I need them to function at my best?
- Will I like a suitcase college, or will I prefer one where a majority of the students are on campus on the weekend?

- How much of a factor will finances be? Can I afford the cost of a private college or are state schools more feasible?
- Am I willing to work a part time job or take on loans to pay for my education?
- Am I interested in a cooperative education program that alternates study and work, to help finance my education and give me relevant work experience?
- Is my academic and extra-curricular resume strong enough to suggest I am a good candidate for scholarships based on merit not need?

THERE IS NOT ONE PERFECT COLLEGE, BUT THERE ARE MANY GOOD COLLEGES THAT MAY BE THE PERFECT FIT FOR YOU

Finding the colleges that fit your preferences in these areas is a starting point in your search for a college or colleges that best fit YOUR needs.

WHEN EVALUATING YOUR ACCUMULATED INFORMATION YOU WANT TO KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND:

1. Most colleges accept students above and below the stated average SAT and ACT scores.
2. Some colleges are de-emphasizing SAT results.
3. You should not let the cost of a college deter you from applying because many expensive private schools develop a strong financial aid package for students based on the FAFSA/CSS PROFILE.
4. In evaluating a college through websites and literature, look for specific information and READ do not skim or look at pictures.
5. Choosing a college is like buying a car or an outfit, you would not purchase either with out a test drive or trying it on. So make sure you VISIT colleges before making your decision.

PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

1. Biographical information
2. Academic information or record
 - a. SAT, ACT, SAT subject test
 - b. Grades (transcript)
 - c. Class Rank (optional)
 - d. Curriculum- High school courses
3. Personal Information
 - a. Essays
 - b. Extra curricular activities
 - c. Interview (generally not required but recommended)
4. Supporting Documents

- a. Teacher recommendations
- b. Guidance counselor recommendation- transcripts and school profiles
- c. Supplementary materials- additional data or recommendations

TERMS YOU WILL WANT TO KNOW

Regular Admissions- The admission plan used by a great number of colleges with application deadlines usually between January 1 and March 1 and acceptance or rejection notification during April.

Rolling admissions- Many state universities and liberal arts colleges accept qualified students on a first come, first serve basis. A college reviews data as the application is received and return decisions within a few weeks after the “file” is reviewed.

Early Decision Plan- This admissions plan involves a strong commitment to a particular college by a strong student. The early decision deadline is usually November 1st of the applicant’s senior year. In some cases, all admission tests must have been completed by the applicant no later than the summer after the junior year. Applicants are usually notified of the admissions decision within a month of the college’s receipt of all application materials, and applicants who are accepted are usually committed by the contract to attend the college. A student may only apply to one college under an early decision plan.

Early Action- An option offered by an increasing number of schools which allows applicants to receive a decision by Christmas if all application materials are in by November 15th. This is non binding and allows students to apply to multiple schools early. Students must be highly organized to take advantage of this admission option.

Wait List- A list of students who were not initially accepted by an institution but who may be accepted at a later date if space is available. Wait list candidates may not be notified of a final decision until late in the summer.

Deferred Admission- Many colleges offer an opportunity for a student who has been admitted to delay or defer enrollment for a year or semester. It is easier to apply during the senior year and notify the college of plans for deferral after of acceptance.

Common application- allows a student to fill out one application and send the application via the internet to multiple schools. Over 400 schools subscribe to the common application. www.commonapp.org

STANDARDIZED TEST

Standardized test can produce more anxiety than any other single part of the college admissions process. This is unfortunate because it is often the anxiety which prevents you from achieving your maximum score.

Remember –

1. The SAT and ACT are not intelligence test
2. The SAT and ACT are not infallible
3. The SAT and ACT are not the most important credential.
4. **You can prepare for these tests.**

All colleges which require standardized test require either the:

SAT Reasoning Test:

The SAT Reasoning Test of the College Board is a three hour and 45 minute exam which measures reasoning skills. The critical reading portion will include 19 sentence completion questions and 48 passage based reading questions. The longer reading passages will have questions that test vocabulary in context, questions that assess understanding of significant information directly stated in the passage and extended reasoning questions. Reading selections are drawn from the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.

The SAT math portion contains 44 standard multiple choice questions and 10 student produced responses that must be entered on grids. The math section is comprised of numbers and operations (20-25%), algebra and functions (35-40%), geometry and measurement (25-30%), and data analysis, statistics and probability (10-15%)

The SAT writing section includes both multiple choice questions and a direct writing measure in the form of an essay. The multiple choice sections include: Improving sentences (25 questions), Identifying sentence errors (18 questions), and Improving paragraphs (6 questions).

Test scores can be sent to four colleges or scholarship sources FREE each time the test is taken. Though the counseling office sends scores with each student's transcript, an increasing number of colleges require scores to be sent directly from the testing agency. It is necessary to send your scores at the time that you register or a later time via the internet or phone. Extra score reports cost \$9.50 each via the internet and \$10.00 via the phone.

The College Board recommends that students take the SAT once during the spring of the junior year and again in the fall of the senior year. Students can register for the test via the internet at www.collegeboard.com or through the mail. Registration guides are available in the guidance office. It is the students' responsibility to fill out the registration form and get it in the mail on time. On test day you must show up at the testing center on time with your admission ticket and a photo ID.

SAT SUBJECT TEST:

This group of one hour tests is an expanded battery of tests and will include: writing, literature, world languages, history, mathematics, and sciences. These tests provide additional information for college admissions representatives to determine admission, course placement and course work. These tests are usually taken in May or June of the junior year and/or fall of the senior year. Students may take up to three subject test on a single test date.

ACT-

The American College Test is a test battery given at test centers on specific dates. The ACT consists of test in four areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. The composite score referred to by colleges is an average of these scores (scores range from 1-36 for each of the four test). The ACT now has an optional writing section which has a written essay, some colleges will substitute the ACT plus writing for SAT subject test. Students can sign up for the ACT via the internet at www.actstudent.org or via the mail.

AP TEST- ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Advanced placement is a program of college-level courses and exams that gives high school students the opportunity to receive advanced placement or credit in college. These examinations are administered in May each year; students enrolled in AP courses will receive registration information during February.

TOEFL- (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

The purpose of the TOEFL is to evaluate the English proficiency of students whose native language is not English.

TEST TAKING TIPS:

1. Get a full night's sleep the night before the test. Last minute cramming is usually of limited value.
2. Get up early enough so that you can eat a good breakfast and arrive at least a half-hour before the test starts.
3. At a minimum, take the practice test provided by the College Board or the ACT. Each website will have practice test available.
4. Bring something to eat and drink during the break.
5. Dress in layers, if you are warm you can always take off a sweater or sweatshirt.
6. Relax; a positive attitude will probably do more for your scores than any amount of frantic preparation.

A TIME TABLE FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Getting into college can be an interesting adventure depending on how it is approached. In any case, there are going to be details, deadlines and decisions, all of which are easier if there is preparation for them. This is a guideline, subject to the variation of your choices and preferences.

During your high school years explore and research colleges by:

1. Searching the internet, two great college search sites are www.collegeview.com and www.princetonreview.com.
2. Looking over college information books and view-books, many can be found in the guidance office.
3. Meeting with college representatives- each fall colleges across the country send reps to high schools to meet with interested students. A list of visiting colleges can be found on our website, students must sign up in the guidance office and are responsible to make up any assignments that they miss.
4. Visiting colleges – the best time to do this varies with your interest and needs, but visiting on a day when the college is in session and the admissions office is open gives a much better view of the college. Arrange for an overnight visit if it is possible.

COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE FOR SECOND SEMESTER JUNIORS

JANUARY: Begin to use the sources of information about colleges that you have identified. Read publications carefully. Talk to teachers, counselors, parents, and friends in high school and college about your plans and expectations. Prepare for mid-term exams.

FEBRUARY AND MARCH: Attend the National College Fair. Register for the SAT and ACT, most students take the SAT and/or the ACT more than once, check test dates and registration deadlines. If you have not done so, meet with your counselor to begin to prepare a list of schools to explore. Request information from schools via their websites.

MARCH: Continue to clarify your goals, interest and needs. Explore with your counselor whether or not you should consider taking the SAT subject test. These are one hour exams given by the College Board in 20 different subject areas which some colleges require for admission. Plan to take these tests in June while the subject matter is fresh in your mind. The free booklet “Taking the SAT Subject Test” is available in the guidance office.

APRIL AND MAY: If you have not done so, develop a preliminary list of colleges that interest you. Be sure to visit websites and request information. Begin to eliminate some schools from your initial list and begin scheduling visits to some schools that remain on

your list. Register with the NCAA clearinghouse if you are an athlete who is considering playing at the college level in either Division I or II. www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST: Plan more visits, take the SAT subject test (if appropriate), start preparing and studying for the fall SAT or ACT tests.

VISITING AND INTERVIEWING AT A COLLEGE

1. Always make an appointment. This means plan in advance, call or contact the admissions office via the colleges website suggesting the day you wish to arrive. If you plan a visit to campus and spend some time there, arrange your interview at the end of your visit if possible. Do this so that you have maximum opportunity to talk with students and gain some first hand knowledge about the school which can help in the interview. If a tour, meeting with students, or attending a class is desired, then put this into your request. **PLAN AHEAD!**
2. Know something about the school before arriving for an interview. Ask questions that are important to you, and not answered in the catalog or website. Give the impression that you are interested.
3. Be curious. They will not be very interested in you if you are not interested in them. Schools look for students showing interest, curiosity, purpose etc. for attending their school. Show signs of it!!
4. Remember this is one opportunity to be something other than a number or a statistic, make good use of it. You are being judged as a person, and you are also judging the school. You are going to be making a decision about them, don't think they are the only ones with a decision to make. Be an active participant in the interview; don't sit quietly acting as though you have nothing to do with the interview.
5. The way you dress, act and conduct yourself will be a sign as to what importance you place on this event. Sloppy, casual behavior gives the admissions officer the idea that not very interested in what is happening. Why should they be very interested in you? No enthusiasm on your side can result in a lack of it from the school. It can also be infectious and you can stir up interest in you by being engaging and interesting.
6. If you care-show it- if you don't care- why waste their valuable time and yours!!

A LOOK AHEAD, COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE FOR SENIORS

FALL OF YOUR SENIOR YEAR: This is the time to be finalizing your college choices and begin applying to schools. It is wise to have a plan for yourself as early as possible. Try to select schools representing two or three levels of admissions standards; I.E. "reach school", "realistic schools", and "safety schools". Each student will meet with their counselor individually to discuss where they are in the college process. This will be your senior session.

SEPTEMBER: Sign up for the October and/or November SAT's or October ACT. Meet with your counselor to be sure your list includes colleges appropriate to your academic and personal record. Review your transcript with your counselor to ensure its accuracy and to ensure you have all the necessary graduation requirements.

OCTOBER: Attend a regional college fair to investigate further those colleges which you will probably apply. Begin to gather information needed for applications. Line up your teacher recommendations. If applying for Early Decision, send your application now. Also begin preparing applications for back up schools. Sign up for the December SAT or ACT if needed.

NOVEMBER: Take SAT reasoning test or SAT subject test if needed (this is the only test date for listening test). Be sure that your first quarter grades are good. If appropriate, complete the CSS/Profile, this is found at www.collegeboard.com.

DECEMBER: If needed take the SAT or SAT subject test or ACT tests. Have scores sent to colleges you are applying to. Send your final college applications. Consult with your counselor to review your final list of colleges. Be sure to have all of your bases covered. If you applied Early Decision, you should have an answer by the 15th. You should also begin preparing to fill out the FAFSA. This is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid found at www.fafsa.ed.gov this form must be filed after January 1 if you want colleges to present you with a full financial aid package.

JANUARY: Keep working on your grades, and prepare for first semester finals. Request mid-year graded if needed. Begin e-filing your FAFSA.

FEBRUARY, MARCH, & APRIL: Remember to monitor your applications to be sure that all materials are sent and received on time. This is the peak of the scholarship season; make sure you are checking your email and our website for scholarship information.

BEFORE MAY: Decide on the one college which you will attend. Send in your tuition deposit. BE PROUD... you have completed a difficult task. Notify the other colleges that accepted you that you have chosen to attend another school.

MAY: Take the AP exams if appropriate. Request that your counselor send your final transcript to the college you will attend.

FINANCING A COLLEGE EDUCATION

The cost of education, like everything else, is going up. If you are going to continue your education after high school – at a four year college or a university – you should know about financial aid.

Most people in our society agree that it's mainly up to students and parents to pay for postsecondary education. That being said, the cost of post secondary education includes not just tuition and fees, but also room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other personal expenses.

If the cost of an education seems too high, don't be discouraged; financial aid is available for students who need it. Many students who are eligible for aid do not apply because they believe they will not receive any financial aid and for most this is true on a federal level. What you must understand is that aid comes in three levels, federal, state, and institutional. Most students will qualify for some type of state and institutional aid but you must file a FAFSA. **The best single source of information about meeting college cost is the financial aid office at the college which you are applying.**

THE STEPS YOU ALWAYS TAKE IN APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

Step 1. Apply for admission to the colleges of your choice. Remember students do not receive financial aid awards until they have been admitted; however, you should request information on financial aid programs available to you through the college when you apply for admission. The sooner your admission application is completed, the sooner you will know about a possible financial aid package from the college. Funds are usually disbursed on a first come first served basis.

Step 2. Apply for financial aid at each college to which you apply for admission. The financial aid officer on each college campus is just as important a contact as the campus admissions officer. On most campuses you must make a formal application for financial aid, through the financial aid officer (many schools have a specific application form for this purpose) and there is usually a specific deadline which may or may not be the same as the application deadline for admission. The financial aid office administers institutional funds and scholarships for which you might be eligible and they will also tell you whether you qualify for such federal aid programs as the National Direct Student Loans or College Work Study.

Step 3. File the appropriate need analysis form. This will be the FAFSA and/or the CSS PROFILE, when appropriate. It will be your parents' responsibility to complete these forms using IRS figures. It will, therefore, not be possible to file either of these forms until after January 1st. FAFSA forms are available at www.fafsa.ed.gov and PROFILE forms are available www.collegeboard.com

Financial Aid Package – The amounts and types of sources of money a student receives to meet financial need. It may include grants and scholarships (no repayment), loans (must be repaid), and a work program whereby the student receives an hourly wage for work performed.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) – This electronic form is used to apply for financial aid from Federal Student Financial Aid Programs.

CSS/PROFILE – This financial aid profile is used by some colleges (mostly private), and scholarship programs. The earlier you file the better, as soon as you are sure you are applying to a college that requires the CSS/PROFILE you should complete the form.

Fastweb.com – this is a free scholarship search engine that has over 600,000 scholarships in its database. The site will continue to email you scholarships that meet your profile.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Impressive

1. Student newspaper
2. Student govt
3. Choir or Orchestra
4. Varsity sports
5. Community service
6. Eagle Scout
7. All-State anything
8. Founder of business
9. Volunteer fireman
10. Ski patrol

Unimpressive

1. Science fiction club
2. Any radical political organization
3. Rock band fan clubs
4. Horseback riding
5. Any organization that may be controversial
6. Babysitting

TEACHER AND COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some guidelines that should help you secure better recommendations.

1. **START EARLY.** Your teachers and counselors are swamped, so give them plenty of time.
2. Give your teachers and counselor all necessary materials, including your application deadlines, resume, and double stamped addressed envelopes (teachers).
3. Waive your confidentiality rights, 99% of students do, if you do not it sends up a red flag to the admissions office.
4. Pick your recommenders wisely. Don't pick a teacher just because you got an A in the class. It is important that the teacher and counselor know you personally.
5. Promptly send a thank you note.

GREENSBURG CENTRAL CATHOLIC HS
QUESTIONS FOR A COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

Presumption: Student knows enrollment, price, location, majors offered

1. Which majors attract the most students?
2. Who actually teaches – Professors or graduate assistants?
3. What is the opportunity for interaction with instructors?
4. What percent of pre-professional students are admitted to professional school?
5. How important is it to declare a major at the time of application?
6. Can you transfer between colleges; e.g. if you apply to the College of liberal arts, can you transfer to the school of business?
7. What percent of students enrolled actually graduate?
8. What are the computer facilities like?
9. What percent of students live on campus?
10. Is housing guaranteed all four years?
11. What is the profile of **admitted** students? SAT, GPA, Rank
12. Is there a Greek system? How strong is its influence?
13. How do freshman schedule classes?
14. What tutoring services are available?
15. Is there a planned recreational program for the weekends?
16. What opportunities are there for work on campus?
17. What is the average debt of a student upon graduation?
18. What merit scholarships do you offer?
19. Can freshman have a car on campus?
20. What general university requirements must all students take?

Websites to use during the college process

1. www.collegeview.com (College search)
2. www.xap.com (College search)
3. www.collegeboard.com (SAT registration)
4. www.actstudent.org (ACT registration)
5. www.fastweb.com (Scholarship search)
6. www.scholarships.com (Scholarship search)
7. www.princetonreview.com (College search/SAT prep)
8. www.fafsa.ed.gov (Electronically file the FAFSA)
9. www.ncaaclearinghouse.net (Athletes register with the NCAA)
10. www.pheaa.org (Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency)