

# **Planning Your Future**



## **Junior / Senior Handbook**

**Prepared for Students  
in Southwest Virginia**

**The Region 7 Consortium  
for Administrators of  
Gifted Education**

**“The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life.”  
– Plato, *The Republic***

High school students face many challenges and decisions as they plan for the future. They decide on courses, extra curricular activities, and plans for life after high school. They consider college, apprenticeship, or jobs. One can never anticipate all the factors involved in making good decisions. However, one can investigate and organize the available information in order to make the best decision possible. There will be many doors of opportunity available to you in your future. We encourage you to grasp the handle and open your doors.

To help students make informed choices, the Region VII Consortium for Administrators of Gifted Education are making this handbook available. The handbook was originally developed in Washington County by Secondary Gifted Facilitator, Carol Sutton. When other members of the Consortium recognized its utility for students in the region, Valencia Angles of Tazewell County undertook to edit it for the students of the region. The school divisions of Region VII have contributed to the cost of production.

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# PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

## INTRODUCTION

Whatever you can do or dream you can begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.

--Goethe

*Where am I going? What do I want to do with my life? What's after high school? Should I get a job? Would I like the military? Where do I want to live? What do I want to study? If I go to college, which is the best – a community college or a four-year college? Will the college I want accept me? How will I decide? What if I change my mind? What if I make a mistake?*

If you have been asking yourself some of these questions, be assured that they are common and the concerns and doubts they represent are normal. As you search for the answers during these last two years of high school, you will be making important decisions about the direction of your life. We compiled this handbook to be a helpful guide as you explore all the possibilities. This handbook will help you with the process of deciding what to do after graduation.

Because the alternatives are too numerous and complex to be decided by chance, we encourage you to make informed decisions by:

- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses
- Establishing your objectives and goals
- Evaluating the options available to you

The counseling department will provide both assistance and information. Your counselor will help you coordinate your efforts by keeping you informed about important dates and deadlines. Counselors are available to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, select your academic program, investigate colleges and careers, and make choices. If you are uncertain about a college major or unsure of what to do after high school, a career

decision-making program can match your individual interests to related occupations. There are additional tools for conducting a college and scholarship search as well as information about specific colleges and career fields.

If you decide that college is your next step, this guide will provide information you need about college entrance examinations, visiting colleges, selecting and applying to colleges, college interviews, and financial aid.

We know that the choices you are facing seem overwhelming at times. However, careful preparation on your part, as well as guidance and support from your family, your school, and your community will result in good decisions that will lead to a rewarding future.

## **WHO AM I?**

*Knowing others is intelligence: knowing yourself is true wisdom.* Chinese Proverb

Understanding yourself – your INTERESTS, ABILITIES, VALUES, and ATTITUDES – is essential for making good decisions about your future.

### **INTERESTS**

- What do you like to do, to study?
- How do you like to spend your time?

### **ABILITIES**

- What are your special talents and skills?

### **VALUES**

- What is most important to you? Family? Friends? Education? \$\$\$? Social Issues?

### **ATTITUDES**

- What is your preferred learning style?
- What is your preferred working environment?

- How do you approach a task?
- What is your work ethic?

Fitting the pieces together to create an accurate picture of you is one of the most important steps you can take in planning life after high school. One way to better understand yourself is to complete the following Self-Assessment Worksheet and Personal Activity Sheet that follow. Another option is to complete the GIS Career Decision Making Inventory or the College Personality Quiz at <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/cpq/coquiz.htm>

*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sail. Explore. Dream. Discover. Mark Twain*

## SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Answer the following questions as completely as possible. (TIP: Some of these same questions are often asked on college applications or in interviews.) Remember that this is a tool to help you explore your accomplishments, goals, thoughts, and values. There are no right or wrong answers. Be honest.

### Academic

1. Describe yourself as a student. Do your grades reflect your abilities? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Which high school courses have been challenging? Which have been most interesting? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What do you like to learn about when you have the choice? What do you read?

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4. In what kind of environment do you learn best? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What skills do you have that are unique? Describe how you currently use these skills in your life.

Athletic Ability

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Mechanical Ability

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Ability to work with numbers

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Leadership skills

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Teaching skills

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Artistic skills

---

Analytical skills

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Extracurricular/Community Involvement/Employment

6. In what school activities (clubs, sports, etc.) do you participate? How have you been a leader in those groups?

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7. What are your interests and hobbies (outside of school)?

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8. Where have you traveled? Describe a memorable travel experience. \_\_\_\_\_

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9. If you have been employed, where did you work? What were your responsibilities? What did you like or dislike about the job?

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10. Describe your preferred working style. (Alone or with others? Under deadlines?) \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Do you enjoy helping others? Describe a meaningful community service activity.

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Personal

12. List three people who have influenced you. How?

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13. List three qualities you admire and respect in others. \_\_\_\_\_

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14. What do your friends say they like most about you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. List three goals you have in life.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Describe your greatest success. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. What was a failure that taught you something?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. What is your definition of happiness?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Describe a fear you conquered.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. List ten things you like and ten things you don't like at all.

LIKE	DON'T LIKE
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____
6 _____	6 _____
7 _____	7 _____
8 _____	8 _____
9 _____	9 _____
10 _____	10 _____

21. What is your one sentence philosophy of life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. What matters most to you? Rate the items on the list below from 1 to 10, with 10 being “extremely important,” 5 being “somewhat important,” and 1 being “not at all important.”

- |                     |                    |                      |             |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| ___ Good Health     | ___ Beauty         | ___ Seeing the World | ___ Charity |
| ___ Justice         | ___ Safety         | ___ Love             | ___ Honor   |
| ___ Marriage/Family | ___ Friendship     | ___ Fun              | ___ Faith   |
| ___ Intelligence    | ___ Respect        | ___ Power            | ___ Wealth  |
| ___ Fame            | ___ Accomplishment | ___ Individualism    |             |

# PERSONAL ACTIVITY SHEET

Another organizational tool is this activity sheet which will help you prepare a resume for college, scholarship, and job applications.

<u>School Activity</u>	<u>Circle Grade</u>	<u>School Activity</u>	<u>Circle Grade</u>
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12

<u>Sports Activity</u>	<u>Circle Grade</u>	<u>Sports Activity</u>	<u>Circle Grade</u>
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12
_____	9 10 11 12	_____	9 10 11 12

Describe any specific leadership experiences you have had in the activities you listed above. Remember that being an officer is not the only way to be a leader.

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Community Activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work Experience (include summer employment): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Awards/Honors:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

References: (at least three individuals, unrelated to you, who can attest to your abilities and character)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZE YOUR OPTIONS

### CAREER FIELDS

The choice of a career involves not only narrowing to a field that matches one's aptitudes, interests, values, and temperament, but also involves understanding levels of careers within a career field. Take time to explore varying occupations within a career field and the different levels of education required for each occupation. Don't rush into a specific career choice. As you consider occupations, think in terms of a career family rather than a specific job. Investigate all levels of jobs within that career family. Also, be aware of the level of education required for each specific job within a career field.

### EXPLORING CAREERS

In addition to your self-assessment, seek information regarding careers and the career decision-making process. Sources of information include, but are not limited to:

- *Counseling Office* – Your counselor can assist you in further clarifying your abilities and strengths. Interest inventories and aptitude tests might help in this assessment. The college counselor, who is knowledgeable in career information, is a good resource for guiding your career exploration. She can help you pursue an intensive career search (via interest inventory, computer software, and other career search avenues). Utilize her knowledge regarding preparatory schools, state technical institutes, community colleges, and vocational/technical programs as well as career information.
- *Agencies* and state employment services, personnel offices at business establishments, trade unions, and professional societies and associations often have free career information.
- *The Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U. S. Department of Labor (Washington, D.C. 20212) is an invaluable source of career information.
- *Professionals* – Family, friends, and professionals in your area(s) of interest are good resources often overlooked.
- *Reference Sources* – These are available in the library or counseling office and include:
  1. *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor
  2. *U.S. Industrial Outlook*, JIST Works
  3. *America's Fastest Growing Jobs*, J. Michael Farr, JIST Works
  4. *Guide to Careers in America*, Career Training Foundation
  5. *Career Guide to America's Top Industries*, JIST Works

6. *America's Top Jobs for Students Without College Degrees*, J. Michael

7. *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, JIST Works

- *State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee* – This committee serves as a resource providing information on career, occupations, educational opportunities and other related occupations and labor market information produced by state and federal agencies.

You may secure computerized information regarding the following aspects of any career of your choice, places of employment, work settings, job descriptions, salaries, specialties available, advancement opportunities, education necessary, predicted growth patterns, and resources available.

Type	Description	Anticipated Length of Study	Transfer of Credit
Training (OJT – On Job Training)	Specific training offered by the employer, includes military service	Usually less than 6 months	*
High School Diploma	Allows students to finish with entry-level job skills	4 years	*
Vocational Technical Certificate	Allows students to finish with entry-level job skills, offered primarily at vocational-technical centers & comprehensive high schools	1 – 3 years	*
Private Trade School	Specific skill training after high school for a particular occupation	3 months – 2 years	*
Associate Degree (Academic & Vocational)	Offered at community/junior colleges, some 4-year colleges & preparatory schools; provides training after high school in specific vocations or for transfer to a senior college	2 years	Institution granting baccalaureate degree will determine applicability of courses from an associate program toward higher degree
Apprenticeship	Formal training program between employee and employer; involves work experience and classroom instruction	2 – 5 years (usually 4 years)	Only credits earned in a college may be transferable
Bachelor's Degree	Formal 4-year program leading to a degree from a college or university	4 years	Credits may transfer among colleges and universities
Master's Degree	Advanced degree, may be required for entry into certain careers.	1 – 2+ years beyond bachelor's degree	Credits may transfer among colleges and universities upon approval of receiving school
Doctorate or Professional Degree	Research or professional degree in preparation for such careers as medicine, dentistry, law, education, or science	3 – 5 years beyond bachelor's degree	Transfer is difficult

\*Not applicable for this level of education

## CAREER CHECKLIST

The following is a list of questions to help you develop an overall picture of your occupational choice. Make photocopies of these questions and apply them toward a number of careers.

1. What education is required for this career?
2. Where would I obtain the training needed?
3. What competition is there for jobs in this field?
4. What is a realistic starting salary at the entry level?
5. Is there opportunity for travel? Is it required? How much?
6. Does this career require my living in a specific geographic location?
7. About how many people are currently engaged in this occupation in Southwest Virginia? My county? Virginia?
8. What personality traits are desirable for this profession?
9. Is there excessive pressure associated with this job?
10. Are there writing skills required for this occupation?
11. How much security does this career afford?
12. How do the swings in the economy affect this career?
13. What is the impact of this career on family life?
14. Does this career demand flexibility in lifestyle – hours, moving, and shift work?
15. Is it possible to combine this career with rearing a family?
16. How easy is reentry into this field after several years away from the field?
17. Are the opportunities for women in this field equal to those of men?
18. How rapidly may I expect to advance in the first ten years?
19. What is the need for this occupation in the next twenty years?
20. How would a person in this occupation spend an average working day?

## WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT – A SUMMARY

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), U.S. Department of Labor, was asked to examine the demands of the workplace and to determine whether young people are capable of meeting those demands.

The SCANS research verified workplace "know-how" as having two elements – the competencies and the foundation. The five competencies and three-part foundation are summarized below.



## **FIVE COMPETENCIES**

**Resources:** Identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources

**Interpersonal:** Works with others

**Information:** Acquires and uses information

**Systems:** Understands complex interrelationships

**Technology:** Works with a variety of technologies

## **THREE-PART FOUNDATION**

**Basic Skills:** Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks

**Thinking Skills:** Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes,

**Personal Qualities:** Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty

*Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want* identifies seven skill groups which incorporate the competencies and foundation given above. They are as follows:

### Seven Skill Groups

1. Learning to Learn
2. Listening and Oral Communication
3. Competence in Reading, Writing, and Computation
4. Adaptability: Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
5. Personal Management: Self-Esteem, Goal-setting/Motivation and Personal Career Development
6. Group Effectiveness: Interpersonal Skills, Negotiation and Teamwork
7. Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership

## **NOT PLANNING ON FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE?**

### **WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS?**

Not everyone needs or wants to go to college for four years. However, it is important to think about and plan for your future. Today's job market is very tough, especially for those without the proper education or skills training. Work of one kind or another is the activity that occupies most of our daily hours during the week for almost fifty years after high school.

### **WORLD OF WORK**

Should you go immediately to full-time work after you graduate?

NO, if you are just “working until...”

- You make up your mind what to do. Some careful planning and preparation now will make temporary stop-gap jobs unnecessary after you graduate.
- You earn enough money for college. Local college tuition remains inexpensive enough for nearly everyone who wants to go, about \$800 to \$2,000 per year for public schools and higher for the private schools. You can afford to start college right after graduation by working part-time and continuing to live at home. Also, many grants and scholarships are available.

NO, if you know that you will do better in the long run by getting additional training or schooling now. Don't be forced to stay on the bottom rung of the company ladder if you can start higher and rise faster by getting some training now. Nearly, 80% of the jobs require technical training beyond high school. Schooling becomes harder later on when you have the responsibilities of a home and family. If you need more training, get it now.

YES, if you are already employed part-time and know that you want to continue with that company. The company may assist with tuition.

YES, if you have a clear idea of the career you want to follow and know that you can succeed without further training or education. However, times and technology change and learning should continue with periodic updates for your lifetime.

If full-time work is your best choice after graduation, how can you prepare for it now?

You should do some research now about the job opportunities in the immediate future and in the long range future. You can learn a great deal about careers by:

- Taking an interest and aptitude survey
- Using career materials such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the Dictionary of the Occupational Titles (DOT), which has job descriptions of the various occupations, and the VGM career series
- Skimming through the want-ads in the newspaper from time to time, and noticing what jobs seem to be in demand
- Checking the library for books about different careers
- Preparing a resume
- Keeping alert to newspaper and magazine articles about careers and future trends in employment
- Asking your counselor about job placement on campus

You should get some work experience to make you more desirable to a future employer and to give you some idea about the work you might, or might not, want to do.

Some possibilities are:

- Part-time jobs after school hours
- A career and technology education program that combines school with work: internships, co-ops, and apprenticeships
- Summer employment
- Job shadowing, spending time in the workplace with an employee as he or she goes through a normal day on the job

#### VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

If you are not planning to enter college (junior or senior) upon graduation from high school, you may want to explore other alternatives that will offer practical job training.

Technical schools offer two-year programs designed to update technical skills. Additional job skills will raise the beginning salaries, improve working conditions, and allow for more opportunity for advancement.

Should you go for further training right after you graduate?

NO, if you are still “fumbling” around looking for a career. Technical schools are very specialized and offer training in very specific jobs. They aim for immediate employment in a definite job, sometimes with a particular company.

NO, if you haven’t carefully studied the credentials of the vocational/technical school. Unfortunately, there are many “fast buck” operators in the field who promise you a wonderful job after your expensive training and then deliver nothing. Do not sign a contract until you have verified that the school and its program are legitimate. You can make sure of this by asking the Better Business Bureau or the Virginia Education Agency. You can also contact the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, 2251 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20007, for detailed information regarding vocational and technical schools.

YES, if you are sure what career you want to pursue, what training you must have, and where that training is available.

When making your career decisions, you should consider;

- Careers that are in demand
- What training and schooling is necessary
- Stability of career/job

Technical schools offer two-year programs designed to update technical competence and professional levels. Some technology curriculums may lead to an associate degree. Students entering an associate degree program must meet certain requirements. Most

technical schools will require an entrance examination in math, reading, English, and perhaps technical aptitude.

Examples of vocational/technical schools include:

- Art Institutes
- Allied Health Schools
- Business Schools
- Fashion Schools
- Electronic Schools
- Community Colleges
- Junior Colleges

When selecting these schools, you should consider:

- Reputation of school
- Credentials and accreditation
- Success of job placement
- Duration of school program
- Tuition and total cost of program
  
- *State technical schools/colleges.* These public institutions offer technical/vocational training in a variety of fields at a cost that is often less than private technical schools.
  
- *Private trade, technical or business schools.* There are more than 7,000 trade or technical schools throughout the U.S. These schools offer training for many occupations. When considering an occupation that requires training in one of these schools, one should consider courses, facilities and equipment, hands-on training, placement assistance, state licensing cost, and accreditation offered by the institution. (Contact the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, 2251 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20007 for detailed information regarding trade and technical schools. Contact the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools, 1730 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, for information regarding business schools).

If a vocational/technical program is in your best interest after graduation, how can you prepare for it now?

- Go through the same steps recommended for full-time work after graduation.
- In addition to doing job research, also check out the schools in which you are interested.
- Visit with the representatives from various vocational and technical schools.

- Contact a prospective employer or two. Ask him/her what sort of training is recommended and what school he/she thinks is good. Ask about present hiring policies and the job prospects in that field for the next ten years.
- *Industry training programs.* Many private employers such as large corporations, hospitals, or insurance companies offer job training to employees.
- *Apprenticeships.* There are over 700 occupations that offer apprenticeships. Supervised on-the-job training is combined with technical studies. These programs are conducted by employers, often jointly with labor unions. The apprentice gains practical experience as a worker on the job – possibly in a factory, laboratory, office, or at a construction site. Apprenticeship periods last from one to six years, with most trades requiring three to five years of organized training and instruction. Apprentices are paid by their employers while they learn – usually at progressive rates from a starting salary of about one-half of the skilled craftsman’s rate to ninety percent of full pay near the end of the apprenticeship. A certificate of completion is given by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training of the U. S. Department of Labor when the required training has been completed. A few of the skilled trades in which apprentices are found are automotive mechanic, butcher, most of the building and construction trades, compositor, electronic technician, pattern maker, machinist, optical technician, lithographer, and medical and dental technicians.

## TWO-YEAR PROGRAMS

Students whose main goals are directed towards preparation in a vocational, technical, or semi-professional occupation may pursue training immediately after high school at a community college. All career programs at the community college stress competency in job-entry skills, either in a degree program requiring two years of study, or a competency certificate program possibly requiring one year of study.

There are many community/junior colleges in Virginia that offer a wide variety of programs. Career training varies from institution to institution. The examples listed below are from a community college. Consult the catalog of the community college to determine if the college offers career programs that interest you.

Example:  
Associate of Applied Science Degree Programs  
(Two-Year Program)

Accounting	Interior Design Technology
Air Conditioning/Refrigeration	Legal Assisting
Automotive Technology	Management
Child Care and Development	Marketing
Cosmetology	Medical Office Management
Criminal Justice	Micro computing Application
Data Processing Programmer/Analyst	Nursing
Data Processing Systems Operations	Office Administration
Dental Assisting	Photographic Technology
Diesel Technology	Real Estate
Drafting Technology	Records Specialist
Electronics (Computer Hardware Specialist)	Respiration Care Specialist
Electronics (Telecommunication Specialist)	Travel and Tourism
Geological Technology	Veterinary Technology
Human Resources	Welding
Information and Records Management	Word Processing
Institutional Food Service	

Example:  
Certificate of Competency Programs

The Certificate of Competency is awarded upon completion of specific courses of study in the following fields. These programs vary in length and are designed to prepare the student for immediate occupational employment.

Air Conditioning/Refrigeration	Legal Assisting
Automotive Servicing	Legal Secretary
Child Care and Development	Microcomputer Applications
Cosmetology	Office Clerical
Dental Assisting	Photographic Technical
Diesel Engine Mechanics	Records Technician
Drafting	Respiratory Care Technician
Human Services	Secretary
Human Services: Substance Abuse	Vocational Nursing
Institutional Food Service	Welding

Eighty percent of today's jobs require technical or vocational skills. Each year a large number of students enrolled in Virginia vocational/technical schools who ultimately enter the marketplace as court reporters, secretaries, computer programmers, medical or dental technicians, cosmetologists, barbers, electronic technicians, printers, auto and diesel mechanics, commercial artists, airline reservationists, welders, or other skilled professionals. Schools that train these students are sensitive to community and labor needs and are able to adapt their curriculum quickly to meet these needs. They generally provide intensive training in a short period of time in order to enable students to obtain employment as soon as possible.

### COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community colleges generally have an "Open Admission" policy. Students who have graduated from high school can usually be admitted, although on-campus testing may be required. Very low scores may necessitate some remedial or non-credit work depending upon the type of program you plan to enter.

Community colleges provide excellent opportunities to develop career skills or to take the basic course work toward a four-year degree.

Community colleges generally offer two major types of programs. One is the "Transfer Program" for those who later plan to attend a four-year college. The other is a "Career Preparatory Program" that may lead to an Associate of Applied Science Degree or some kind of certification that can be achieved in two years or less.

Associate Degrees are offered by community colleges for successful completion of specified programs. Associate Degree Programs are designed to be completed within two years. Students planning to pursue a degree from a four-year institution must plan carefully to ensure that the courses taken at the junior college transfer to the senior institution and apply toward a specified baccalaureate degree. The requirements for transfer and application to a degree vary from institution to institution and demand planning and coordination. Students taking "transfer courses" may earn an Associate of Arts Degree when they complete specified programs at the community college.

### MILITARY OPPORTUNITIES

Joining the military enables you to do several things at once. You can serve your country, earn a salary right away, and get training that will probably help you whether or not you make the service your lifetime career. You can also, through various educational programs, earn your college degree while in the service or have the government pay for a large part of your college expenses after you leave the service.

***Full-time military personnel are the first called upon to serve in crisis areas in times of national need.***

The various branches of the United States Armed Services provide a variety of opportunities for career training in occupationally specific areas. Many of the career training areas are common for all the military organizations, while some are specific to the respective branches.

Some of the programs that provide career education opportunities for military personnel are as follows:

- *The National Apprenticeship Program* – provides skill training which can lead to apprenticeship certification in many career fields. Avionics, data systems, electronics, machinist, meteorology, mechanics, fire fighting, welding, photography, law enforcement, and career counseling are just some of the examples of areas in which certification may be earned.
- *The Montgomery G.I. Bill Program* – enlistees who enroll in this program pay \$100 per month for their first year of active duty (\$1,200). In return, they receive up to \$19,000 or college expenses.
- *College Program* – enables students interested in becoming officers to receive R.O.T.C. benefits. A \$150 per month allowance is paid during college enrollment. After graduation, students receive commissions as **reserve** officers.
- *Service Academies (West Point, U.S. Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard Academy)* – consult the college portion of this handbook and see your counselor the fall of your junior year regarding requirements. Nominations should be requested in the fall of your senior year.

If you do not want to be in the military full-time, a reserve program can provide you with some financial assistance for college.

- *The Reserve G.I. Bill* – provides educational assistance for up to \$6,923. In order to qualify, you must be a high school graduate, enlist in the reserves for six years (the minimum time allowed for reserve duty), and complete Initial Active Duty Training.

Persons in the reserves are required to serve one weekend of unit drill and training each month and two weeks of training a year, usually in the summer months. While on active duty, you would earn the same salary as a full-time soldier. *Enlistment in the reserves is for a time period of at least six years.*

*The reserves may be called upon to serve in crisis areas during times of national need after full-time military have been called.*

The reserve program allows students to begin their active duty the summer between the junior and senior years of high school. Students involved in this program serve for two months during the summer, earning \$874 each month. During their senior year, they are required to serve one weekend each month in unit drill and training. The senior year of service counts as one of the six required years in the reserves.



**High school students involved in the reserve program are exempt from being sent to crisis areas during time of national need.**

Should you go into the military immediately after graduation?

NO, if you are doing that because nothing else seems handy.

YES, if you know what is expected of you and what you will gain in return. The military services offer unique opportunities available nowhere else.

### **What is required to join the military?**

Full-time and reserve military after graduation:

You Must:

- Be able to pass a physical. There are some physical limitations that prohibit getting into the military.
- Meet a height and weight standard established by the military.
- Have a high school diploma, or if you have a G.E.D., you must also have at least 15 college hours, depending on which branch of the military you are joining. (Only in rare instances are persons allowed into certain branches with a G.E.D. only.) If you are enlisting months or weeks prior to graduation, you must bring a letter from your school verifying that you will graduate.
- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Provide your Social Security Card and your driver's license.
- Provide your I.N.S. card, green card, or temporary resident card if you are an alien resident.

*Reserve military beginning the summer after your junior year in high school:*

In addition to the requirements listed above, with the exception of the high school diploma verification, you must:

- Be at least 17 years old. Provide your birth certificate.
- Provide a letter from your school verifying grade level and good conduct record.
- Have a parent sign the military consent form.

If the military service is your best choice after graduation, how can you prepare for it now? You can talk to the recruiters from the various services. Recruiters also visit campuses. Remember, not all services offer the same opportunities; you need to find out what each one offers you and what your obligation is in return.

Other helpful tips:

- You can take the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (AFVAB). This test helps identify skills that are available for various jobs in the service. Contact your local recruiter regarding test dates and times.
- Check with your counselor or recruiter about specialized military opportunities, such as the Academies, R.O.T.C. programs and scholarships, the National Guard, and the reserves.

## **TESTING**

### **STANDARDS OF LEARNING (SOL)**

Virginia state law has mandated that students must pass the Standards of Learning (SOL) by the end of their twelfth grade year in order to receive their diplomas.

### **PSAT/NMSQT**

The PSAT is designed to familiarize students with the SAT 1 and serves as an excellent predictor of what a student is likely to do on the actual SAT college entrance examination. The PSAT is also the only way that a student can qualify for the National Merit Scholarship competition, and the scores are used as the selection basis for many collegiate and other types of scholarships.

The PSAT is basically a condensed version of the SAT, and just like the SAT, there is a math and verbal section that consists of multiple-choice questions. The questions are exactly like the kind asked on the SAT. Instead of the three math and three verbal sections, however, there is only one section of each. Like the SAT, there is a writing skills portion of the test (also multiple choice), which is similar to the SAT II writing test.

Students can score anywhere from 20 to 30 on the verbal and math sections, for a combined score of 40 to 160. Multiplying this score by 10 gives a comparable equivalent to an SAT II writing test score.

The Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) is given each October and is taken by most juniors and some sophomores. Students who register for the test will receive a "Student Bulletin" with sample questions, scoring information, and strategies for taking the test. Ample notification will be given as to the deadline for registration, the date and the hour of the test. Other preparatory materials are available on the College Board web site and at bookstores and local libraries. Scores usually are reported to the students by mid-December. A booklet with a comprehensive explanation of the scores and their meaning will be given to each student. School counselors can help with interpreting and using the PSAT scores.

## COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTS

The purpose of the college entrance exams is to provide the college administration with a common measure of ability in order to understand and compare applications from varying educational backgrounds. High schools have different grading practices and standards; within a high school, students take different courses. The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT I) and the American College Testing program (ACT) provide that common measure of ability. The admission officer may combine your SAT I or ACT score with high school grades and /or class rank to determine your probability of success on the campus. Colleges strive to admit students who will most likely succeed and graduate!

Therefore, the first step in the college application process is to take the SAT I or ACT. Many colleges will accept either test; some require a specific one. You must find out which test the college of your choice requires. You are encouraged to take the SAT I and ACT at the end of your junior year and again in the fall of your senior year. Early test results enable you to know if you qualify for the schools that interest you. If your score is below the requirement, you have more time to retest. Obtain the application for these tests from your counselor or register on-line at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for the SAT and [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for the ACT. Get your school CEEB code from your counselor to ensure that the school receives information about your test results. The test is given on Saturday mornings at local high schools or colleges.

By following the recommended schedule for testing, you will meet the deadlines for most colleges and universities. Approximately six to eight weeks before the test date, you should mail your registration form and payment. Prior to the test date, you will receive an admission ticket through the mail, which you **MUST** take to the test center with proper identification. Specific guidelines for ID must be followed; they are included with your ticket. Tests may be taken more than once; the higher score will be accepted in most cases, but check the college catalog to determine how the university or college handles additional scores. Some private schools will look at the highest SAT I verbal and math scores on separate tests, but state schools usually require scores from one test date to meet admission requirements.

## SAT I AND SAT II TESTS

**SAT I:** The SAT initials stand for Scholastic Assessment Test. The SAT I is a three-hour multiple-choice test of verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities administered by the College Board. Each section is scored on a scale of 200-800 with a composite score derived by adding these three scores. Random guessing on the SAT I is not recommended; a fraction of a point is deducted for each incorrect answer.

**SAT Subject** These one-hour subject tests are given by the College Board. Students register for them the same way they register for the SAT I; they are given on the same dates. A student may take one, two, or three subject tests on a test day. These are given in the same time period as the SAT I; one cannot take both the SAT I and SAT subject tests on the same day. Many colleges do not require any SAT subject tests, but highly academic, competitive schools usually want to see your scores from three subject tests. Check with the individual colleges to see what tests are required.

Students considering selective schools that may require SAT subject tests should consider taking English and Math tests at the end of their junior year for early decision and no later than December of the senior year for regular decision. Some colleges require these tests to help decide admissions, along with the SAT I, and others use the SAT subject tests as placement tests. Normally these colleges require tests in Math, Writing, and one other subject of the student's choice

The best time to take these subject tests is when the information is fresh in your mind. If you want to take the SAT subject test and you take the class your sophomore year, take the test in May or June of that year. Similarly, if you finish your third year of a foreign language, take the SAT subject test in May or June of that school year.

Some colleges award credit or exempt students from course requirements on the basis of the SAT subject testing.

### ACT

The ACT initials stand for American College Test. The ACT is a three-hour curriculum-based test in English Usage, Mathematics (Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry), Reading Comprehension, and Science Reasoning. Each section is scored on a scale of 1–36; the composite score is most often used for admission decisions. Some colleges use subject test scores on the ACT for advanced placement. **Answer every question**; there is no penalty for wrong answers. Your score is based on the number of questions you answer correctly.

When preparing for the ACT, it is *not* necessary to review vocabulary or concern yourself with mental strategies, but it is wise to review geometry. *It is important* to study the practice book, especially the instructions. To get the best possible score, you need to finish each section. Learn what the instructions will be so time is not lost on the test day. **Answer each question**; there is no penalty for guessing. Watch your time. If you see that you cannot finish a section, fill in something for the remaining questions *before* time is called.

## SAT VS. ACT

The road to college can be a confusing and hectic experience. Choosing the right admissions test to take – SAT or ACT – doesn't have to be. While most colleges across the country accept scores from either test, the SAT and ACT are significantly different tests and in many ways, they measure different skills. Check with your guidance counselor and use the following information to decide which test is best for you.

### Differences at a Glance

SAT	ACT
No science section	science reasoning section
No trigonometry	math includes trigonometry
Vocabulary emphasized	vocabulary less important
Non multiple-choice questions included	entirely multiple-choice
Guessing penalty	no guessing penalty
No English grammar	English grammar tests
Math accounts for 50% of score	Math accounts for 25% of score
Questions go from easy to hard	Easy and hard questions mixed

Comparable scores on the ACT and SAT			
ACT	=	SAT	Percentile
36	=	2400	99
29	=	1920	90
27	=	1820	80
25	=	1700	70
23	=	1590	60
21	=	1500	50
20	=	1410	40
18	=	1240	30
15	=	1060	20

### SAT

The SAT consists of nine sections, including a 25-minute essay, each timed separately. The essay will always be the first section of the SAT, and the 10-minute multiple-choice writing section will always be the final section. The five other 25-minute sections can appear in any order, as can the two 20-minute sections. Test takers sitting next to each other in the same testing session may have test books with entirely different sections.

In addition, there is one 25-minute unscored section, known as the variable or equating section. This unscored section may be a critical reading, math, or multiple-choice writing section. This unscored section does not count toward the final score, but is used to try

out new questions for future editions of the SAT and to ensure that scores on new editions of the SAT are comparable to scores on earlier editions of the test. Each section of the SAT is scored on a scale of 200-800, and the writing section contains two subscores.

<b>Content</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>	<b>Time</b>
Extended Reasoning	36 – 40	70 minutes (Two
Literal Comprehension	4 – 6	25 minute sections,
Vocabulary in Context	4 - 6	and one 20-minute section)
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>70 minutes</b>

<b>Content</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>	<b>Time</b>
Number and Operations	11 – 13	70 minutes (Two
Algebra and Functions	19 – 21	25-minute sections,
Geometry and Measurement	14 - 16	and one 20-minute section)
Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability	6 - 7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>70 minutes</b>

<b>Content</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>	<b>Time</b>
Essay	1	60 minutes (One
Improving Sentences	25	25-minute essay, one
Identifying Sentence Errors	18	25-minute multiple-choice section, and one 10-minute
Improving Paragraphs	6	multiple-choice section)
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60 minutes</b>

All Subject Tests are one-hour, multiple-choice tests. However, some of these tests have unique formats. Be sure to check [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for information before your test date.

<b>ACT</b>			
<u>Section</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Scoring</u>
English	45 min.	75	1 – 36
Math	60 min.	60	1 – 36
Reading	35 min.	40	1 – 36
Science	35 min.	40	1 – 36
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2 hrs. 55 min.</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>1 – 36</b>

SAT Critical Reading is like analyzing a debate, while ACT Reading is more like researching a term paper. If you're good at Interpretation, you'll do well on the SAT. If you're a more quantitative thinker, you might be more comfortable on the ACT.

## THE VERBAL SECTIONS

### SAT

The SAT verbal sections include: Analogies, Sentence Completions and Critical Reading. You'll need to work around tough vocabulary in both Analogies and Sentence Completions.

In the Critical Reading section, you'll get to answer the questions, you'll have to grasp the author's overall argument quickly, and draw relationships between the details of the passage and its main idea.

## THE MATH SECTIONS

### SAT

The SAT Math sections contain approximately equal proportions of arithmetic, algebra, and geometry questions, along with some other question types that require skills like probability and logical reasoning. The SAT is interested in testing your ability to manipulate information.

The questions are a mix of Math (multiple-choice), Grid-ins (regular math problems where you have to fill in the answer), and Quantitative Comparisons (multiple-choice questions where you'll have to compare quantities in two columns.)

### ACT

The ACT English section gives you a series of sentences and paragraphs and asks you to identify and correct any grammatical or punctuation errors, garbled or redundant prose, or stylistic flubs. Don't be alarmed, though. These questions do not test arcane grammar rules, but rather your basic grammar skills, logic and common sense.

In the ACT Reading section, you'll be given four passages followed by questions mostly asking you to locate facts and verify information.

### ACT

The ACT Math sections require you to know pre-algebra, algebra, and coordinate and plane geometries. Unlike the SAT, you'll also see trigonometry, the quadratic formula, and graphs and equations of circles, ellipses, and parabolas.

All questions are multiple-choice Math questions. They are straightforward, requiring you to know a particular concept or formula – so you'll need to have this information memorized.

Both the SAT and ACT test high school math and permit you to use a calculator. If you enjoy questions that call upon logical reasoning and visualization, you might prefer the SAT. If you're more comfortable with straightforward, academically rigorous questions, you will prefer the ACT.

Taking the ACT Science Reasoning section doesn't mean you'll have to memorize the periodic table! Any information you need is provided. What the section really tests is your ability to think like a scientist – draw conclusions from data, grasp the purpose of an experiment, or identify an assumption underlying a scientific theory.

### ACT COMPOSITE TO SAT-I TOTAL

ACT Composite Score   Estimated SAT-I Total Score

	(V + M)
36	2400
35	2340
34	2260
33	2190
32	2130
31	2040
30	1980
29	1920
28	1860
27	1820
26	1760
25	1700
24	1650
23	1590
22	1530
21	1500
20	1410
19	1350
18	1280
17	1210
16	1130
15	1060
14	1000
13	940
12	880
11	820
10	760



## RELATING ACT ASSESSMENT AND SAT-I SCORES

Please be aware that there are complexities in relating ACT Assessment and SAT scores because the tests measure different psychological constructs. The ACT Assessment tests are curriculum-based tests of educational development while the SAT-I, in contrast, measures general verbal and quantitative aptitudes (readiness to learn) and is less curriculum-based. In addition, over the years, postsecondary institutions and state educational agencies have developed their own concordance tables from the statistical relationships observed between the two tests. An important characteristic of those studies is that they do not yield the same results across institutions. Therefore, a concordant score cannot be interpreted as a precise prediction of the score a student would earn on one test, given a score on the other test.

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT TESTS (APs)

Advanced Placement (AP) tests usually have no direct impact on college admission. The results of APs are not available until you have been admitted to college unless you have taken AP Exams as a sophomore or junior. Then they could be an impressive and important credential when applying to college, provided the scores are good. Schools have varying policies about awarding credit for advanced placement. Scores of 3, 4, or 5 on the 1 – 5 AP grading scale may be considered. While some students not enrolled in an AP course may take the AP exam and do well, this generally requires work beyond normal classroom requirements. AP courses are offered at your high school. Check with your counselor for course schedules. Registration of these courses is handled at the high school. More information about this and the governor's Early Scholar Program can be found at: [www.pen.k12.va.us](http://www.pen.k12.va.us)

There are a number of reasons to consider Advanced Placement Examination:

1. AP Exams provide an opportunity to certify one's knowledge of college level material.
2. The student who places out of prerequisite courses through AP testing can go on to more challenging higher-level college courses.
3. An individual who receives college credit for AP work may have options opened in college, such as entering disciplines without adding to one's course load, being able to cut back on courses during a semester of heavy reading, and taking graduate courses while an undergraduate and still graduating in four years.
4. College costs can be saved if credit is awarded. Greatest savings, up to \$7,000 or \$8,000, or more occur if a student received credit for one year of college work because of scoring a qualifying grade in three or more AP Examinations. More typically, a candidate takes one or two AP exams, but even this can lead to a reduction in the usual four-year requirements if it is combined with taking extra courses during the year or in the summer.
5. AP credit is a bargain. Six semester hours of credit for one AP examination costing \$76 means each credit costs about \$13. Semester hour tuition costs in college begin at \$76.

6. The College Board keeps AP examination grades on file. This allows the student to “bank” AP results and withdraw them when they are needed. They can be sent to the college for evaluation, for credit, or advanced placement in classes.
7. An AP exam can be taken only once in a school year in May. It is most appropriate at the end of the AP course, when the student is best prepared.

## **COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP)**

CLEP tests are another means of receiving credit for knowledge already acquired before college enrollment. CLEP consists of five general and twenty-nine subject examinations. Registration to take CLEP tests is made directly to a university test center that administers the tests several times during the year. Since college credit-by-examination policies vary considerably, you should wait until you have made your final decision to see what testing is appropriate. By receiving a satisfying score, you can earn from three to twelve college credits toward your college degree for each CLEP you take, depending on the exam subject. Seek advice from the college testing office.

## **REPORTING ADMISSION TESTS RESULTS**

Although your high school transcript includes all of your test scores, colleges want an official score report sent directly to them from the testing agency. ***It is your responsibility as an applicant to report your SAT/SAT Subject or ACT scores*** by indicating colleges as score recipients on the registration form or by completing and mailing an Additional Report Request form that you receive with your admission ticket. Be sure and watch college deadlines because your official scores are needed to have a completed application. Scores are usually mailed three weeks after test dates.

## **TEST PREPARATION**

School counselors have observed firsthand the truth of the College Board statement that “the best way for students to prepare for the tests is to take challenging academic courses and to do plenty of reading throughout school.” If you have done this and have the SAT or ACT scores to match the scores of admitted students at the schools in which you are interested, you can relax. You will probably do fine, and that will be the end of it.

If, however, your scores are not as high as you expected, based on your academic accomplishments, or if you are considering highly selective schools and/or scholarship competitions and want to improve your chances, you will probably decide to retest. If so, it will be beneficial to you to do some additional preparations (becoming familiar with the test content and format and learning appropriate test-taking strategies) before you take one or both of these tests a second time.

In the short-term, it is possible to improve scores through familiarization, motivation, and new knowledge. Of the three, motivation is the most important. There is no point in purchasing study guides and computer software or signing up for prep classes if you do not plan to make a reasonable effort to gain from the instruction.

Familiarization with the content and format of the tests can be accomplished through self-study using authentic practice materials. Examples are: your PSAT results, copies of old tests, computer software, the official test guides, and Internet resources (see the appendix of this handbook for a list of helpful websites). Students who are self-disciplined and motivated to use self-study can benefit from these low-cost materials.

Test prep classes are popular because time is structured into a student's busy schedule. One caution: to benefit from a class, you need to have time to complete the homework assignments that are given as well as to reflect and assimilate what is taught. As one expert states, "Taking a class isn't an easy way to improve your scores. Just like your regular classes, you will have to put in outside time and effort. Merely sitting in on a SAT prep class won't raise your scores."

Who offers prep classes? Some high schools will have SAT preparation classes prior to each test date. You will be able to get information regarding the exact dates of these classes from your counselor.

Independent companies also offer instruction. It is important to research the different options offered by each. Most will have several different courses of varying lengths and prices. For example, some well-known national companies are The Princeton Review, Kaplan, and Score! Prep. Information on these and other companies is available in the counseling office.

We do not endorse any program. We believe that you should consider your needs, your learning style, your resources, your level of motivation, your available time, and then decide what is best for you.

Above all, we hope that you will resist getting caught up in the testing hysteria that is so prevalent. If you test one time and get the score you need, you can be finished with testing. For those striving for improvement, taking the test a second time might be enough. Be aware that without additional work/study, testing more than twice will have little benefit. Normally, three is the maximum number of times you should take either the SAT or ACT. College admissions testing and preparation is a big business, and very profitable. Consider the hype as you evaluate your options.

## COLLEGE PLANNING BEGINS HERE

### SELECTING A COLLEGE

Selecting a college that is a great match for your abilities, values, goals—*yours, not your best friend's or your parents'*—is one of the most important decisions you will make as a young adult. This college decision may strongly influence the career path you take. Many of the friends you will make will be life-long friends. Even the geographic area where you will eventually live and work will be influenced by your college. Remember, however, that there is *no one perfect college* for you. Rather, there are many colleges that would be an excellent “fit”. The secret is to know yourself. Be honest about your abilities, goals, and interests; identify the characteristics you prefer in a college; fully research these characteristics in a wide range of colleges; then, finally, narrow your application list to a realistic number of schools.

**Step One:** Access your abilities and identify your goals and interests.

Examine your priorities. What are your goals and interests? What are you good at? In what environment do you do your best? What careers interest you the most? Make lists. Ask questions such as:

#### *Personal considerations:*

1. How important are existing friendships with peers going to a specific college? Will they influence your decision?
2. Family traditions. Are they tied to a particular college, university, or religion? Is that important to you?
3. Area of the country in which the school is located and proximity to home.
4. What is the school's reputation? (Academic, social, or a good balance)
5. What are the expenses? How much debt would you and/or your family assume?
6. What are the housing and meal options?
7. What percent of entering freshmen graduate from this college?
8. What is the size of this school? Would you feel comfortable on a campus this size?
9. Are cultural activities available to suit your interests?
10. What are the wardrobe needs?
11. Would I adapt well to the climate of the area where the school is located?

#### *Academic Considerations:*

1. Will you be more comfortable at a two or four year college?
2. What are your personal study habits? Do they fit with the school attitude?
3. How is the academic year divided?
4. How large are the classes?
5. What is the diversity of students and faculty?
6. Are credits transferable to other schools you might consider for transfer?
7. What percent of graduates are admitted to professional schools?
8. Is there a job placement service for graduates?

**Step Two:** Familiarize yourself with the different types of schools and find out what characteristics to look for when selecting a school.

The schools available to you are as varied as the interests of the students being served. When trying to decide what type of school fits you best, take a look at some of the characteristics you may want to consider in selecting a school. In general, schools can be divided into two major categories: vocational training schools and colleges/universities.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOLS

*Vocational training schools* are privately owned and operated schools that offer a wide variety of training options in areas as cosmetology, mechanical repair, court reporting, paralegal services, travel services, secretarial, and medical assistance. Typical academic preparation is short, lasting from five to twelve months. However, some training programs (such as court reporting) can take up to two to three years to complete. The main appeal of these schools is their concentrated curriculum, job-training focus, and short course length.

### COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

*Two-year community/junior colleges* provide the opportunity to get your feet wet before jumping into a four-year college arena. Community colleges generally offer two-year studies with an associate's degree conferred upon completion. The courses are designed to transfer to four-year colleges, should you decide to continue. Also, like vocational schools, many community colleges often offer specialized job training in certain areas. These studies are designed to prepare you for the work force as soon as you complete your training.

*Four-year colleges and universities* offer bachelor's degrees and a much wider variety of studies. Many also offer graduate studies (studies after a bachelor's degree is completed) with opportunities to earn a master's degree, doctorate, or professional degree (such as a medical doctor). The curriculum is much broader than a two-year school and is designed to accommodate a variety of interests (unless the college specializes in a certain area of study, such as art).

*Public colleges and universities* are subsidized by the states in which they are located and are generally less expensive than private colleges. However, the cheapest rates go to residents of the state in which the college is located. Out-of-state students usually pay much higher fees.

*Private colleges*, on the other hand, are funded through endowments, tuition, and donations. They usually cost more, but don't rule them out! Private colleges offer enough financial aid to make them financially feasible for your budget.

In addition to those listed above, schools can be divided into a number of other categories, including the following:

Size	Specialization
Location (urban/suburban/rural)	Area(s) of study
Cost	Admission requirements
Family tradition	Course offerings
Distance from home	Retention and graduation rates
Religious affiliation	Housing
Diversity	Facilities
Gender (women's/men's/co-ed)	Campus life
Ethnicity	Financial aid opportunities

**Step Three:** Choose the characteristics that are important to you.

Now that you've examined who you are and what you want to be, compare your notes to the different characteristics that have to be considered when selecting a school. Then decide which characteristics are most important to you. Maybe it's important to you to stay close to home, which will narrow your search. Perhaps you want to study a very specialized field that is only offered at a few schools? The choice is yours. Make a list of five to ten characteristics you consider very important in your search.

**Step Four:** Gather information to identify a short list of schools that meet your personal goals and needs. So many resources are available to students looking at colleges that it is hard to know where to start. To do a thorough job of researching, you will want to use several of these:

#### College Guidebooks

A number of different publishers put together guidebooks describing almost everything you want to know about any college or university in the United States and the world. Many of these are available in the counselor's office, public library, and bookstores. A number of guidebooks are also available on CD-ROM. Guides that also address quality-of-life issues are based on surveys of enrolled students and offer subjective information. These include *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* and *Yale Insider's Guide*. For more information about college majors, the College Board's *Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees* is available. Ratings of academic programs, also subjective, can be found in *Rugg's Recommendations on Colleges* and *U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges*.

### College-Produced Resource

There are several computer and on-line college search programs. They include:

- Coin Guidance System
- College Explorer
- Guidance Information System (GIS)
- Inside the SAT and ACT
- College Board Fund Finder
- [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
- [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

### Family, Friends, Counselors

Find out what recommendations and experiences your parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, teachers, counselors, neighbors, and friends have had. Begin to narrow your list of school choices and find alumni who can give you insight into the schools you are interested in attending. Talk with your parents about your possible choices and the means for financing.

### The Internet

Research colleges, scholarships (and other types of financial aid) on-line. See the appendix for a list of Internet resources.

### Visit to College Campuses

The best way to gain firsthand knowledge of a college or university is to visit the campus. Call or write the Office of Admission to set up an appointment. Also, try to arrange to stay overnight in a dorm and to visit a class to get the “real feel” of the campus. Spring break of your junior year is a good time to visit if the college’s break does not coincide with yours. Although visiting in the summer may not give you the complete picture of a college’s atmosphere (the student population is generally much smaller in the summer), it does allow you to tour the actual facility and meet with admissions counselors. If you wait until your senior year to begin your visits, you may be pressed for time with the hectic pace of your final year of high school. Also, keep in mind that absences for college visits ***do*** count against senior test exemptions.

**Step Five:** Apply to the three to five schools (or fewer) that top your list.

Before your college search is complete, compare your academic and personal qualifications to those of students typically admitted to schools where you want to apply. Large public universities usually make admission decisions based on objective information including: number and level of difficulty of high school courses, grade point average, class rank, and standardized test scores (SAT and/or ACT). Private and highly selective schools also consider special talents, community service, extracurricular, and leadership activities.

As you narrow your college list, select one or two institutions that present an admission challenge. These schools are called “reaches”. Make sure your final list also includes one or more “mid-range” colleges, where your qualifications closely match those of the average student. Finally, be sure to apply to at least one “safe” school, where your statistics equal or exceed those of most of the students admitted. Above all, apply only to schools where you would be happy for four or more years.

## JUNIOR PLANNING CALENDAR

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
August & September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to school with a positive attitude. Realize that this is the start of the last full year that colleges will see. It is the most important year for performance.</li> <li>• Make a commitment to concentrate on good grades and challenging college prep courses.</li> <li>• Join a club or other extracurricular activity. Do something beyond activities.</li> <li>• Visit your counselor and discover valuable information you can secure from her.</li> <li>• Listen for announcements related to college and career planning.</li> <li>• Consider taking a PSAT preparation course.</li> <li>• Visit prospective college campuses.</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend meetings at school regarding college.</li> <li>• Consider taking a PSAT preparation course.</li> <li>• Take a PSAT on scheduled date. Your counselor will give you information about the test. Study carefully your <i>free</i> copy of PSAT/NMSQT student bulletin.</li> <li>• Start to define your special abilities, interests, personal qualities, and educational plans.</li> <li>• Visit prospective college campuses.</li> <li>• Prepare for midterm exams.</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain conscious of your grades.</li> <li>• Continue self-assessment and career exploration.</li> <li>• Explore features of colleges or other post-secondary options that meet your needs, interests, aptitudes, abilities (military, tech schools, specialized training).</li> <li>• Contact the military if interested in ROTC scholarships or military academies.</li> </ul>



December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the implications of your PSAT/NMSQT results by reading carefully the interpretation included in “Report of Student Answers” and “About Your PSAT/NMSQT Score”. Go over the test with your answer sheet.</li> <li>• Prepare for midterm exams.</li> <li>• Compile a list of colleges that interest you.</li> <li>• During the holiday break, talk with college friends who are home. Discuss your questions about college life and college selection.</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue your career exploration.</li> <li>• Prepare a list of subjects you would like to study after high school. Arrange in order of preference.</li> <li>• Begin a personal resume sheet for next year, listing your awards and honors; school, extracurricular, and community activities, and jobs. This four-year summary will help you in evaluating your interests.</li> <li>• Consider taking the SAT I preparation course.</li> <li>• Visit prospective college campuses.</li> <li>• Watch for information on financial aid</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with applications for jobs, colleges, postsecondary training.</li> <li>• Prepare a list of personal references (with addresses) to be used for applications.</li> <li>• Register to take SAT I (March, May, or June) and/or ACT (April or June).</li> <li>• Complete computerized self-assessment (ask your counselor).</li> <li>• Visit prospective college campuses.</li> <li>• Select courses for senior year. Sign up for the most challenging courses appropriate for you.</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange in order of importance 3 – 4 careers that are of interest to you. Secure information regarding training necessary for success in those careers.</li> <li>• Contact colleges if considering Early Decision Application next year. Be aware of deadlines for admission tests, achievement tests, and applications for Early Decision.</li> <li>• Continue to update your personal resume sheet.</li> <li>• Continue taking the SAT I preparation course.</li> <li>• Visit prospective college campuses during Spring Break.</li> <li>• Take SAT or ACT.</li> <li>• Prepare for final exams.</li> </ul>

April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate features of colleges/other post secondary plans explored earlier and narrow 3 or 4 choices.</li> <li>• Consider taking SAT I preparation course.</li> <li>• Visit prospective college campuses.</li> <li>• Finalize plans for senior year with your counselor.</li> <li>• Register for May or June SAT I, ACT, and/or SAT subject tests, if requires by colleges.</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become aware of application deadlines for college admission next year.</li> <li>• Take AP exams if applicable.</li> <li>• Begin to evaluate your 3 – 4 college choices in terms of whether they meet your needs of size, cost, academic program, location, student body.</li> <li>• Prepare for final exams.</li> </ul>
June, July, & August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider visiting colleges that interest you. Go with parents, friends, or on an organized tour, being aware that campuses can feel very different during the summer.</li> <li>• Use the summer productively. Begin working on college essay topics, continue working on your resume. Get a job, do volunteer work, attend a summer institute, or travel. Do something productive.</li> <li>• If you are working, discuss with your supervisor the possibility of a letter of recommendation for college or a scholarship.</li> </ul>

## SENIOR PLANNING CALENDAR

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
All year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit your counselor and discover invaluable information you can secure.</li> <li>• Listen for announcements related to college and career planning.</li> <li>• Read the bulletin board announcements in the counselor's office.</li> <li>• Keep a calendar of important dates and deadlines. Mail well ahead of every deadline.</li> <li>• Make copies of every college or scholarship application you submit.</li> <li>• Research and begin applying for scholarships.</li> </ul>
August & September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register for college entrance exams (SAT I or ACT) if you have not already done so. (Register at least 5 weeks in advance).</li> <li>• Obtain registration materials in your counselor's office.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ mail registration form directly to the testing company or register on-line (<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a> or <a href="http://www.act.org">www.act.org</a>)</li> <li>✓ Get your school code from your counselor.</li> <li>✓ You must indicate on the test application which schools you want to receive your test scores. Colleges accept test scores as official only when sent directly from the test company.</li> <li>✓ Determine if the college(s) require SAT Subject Tests. Registration forms are available from your counselor.</li> <li>✓ Sign up for SAT prep classes if you choose to do so.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Make sure you have registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse if you plan to participate in college athletics. See your counselor for forms.</li> <li>• Narrow your preliminary list to approximately 5 colleges. Write to the director of admissions at each college or go on-line to request a catalog, application for admissions, housing, and financial aid information.</li> <li>• Create a complete checklist of test names and registration deadlines, fees, test dates, college application deadlines, financial aid application deadlines, and other deadlines to be met.</li> <li>• Design a search list for possible scholarships.</li> <li>• Decide whom to ask for recommendations and ask them at least 3 weeks before ANY deadline.</li> <li>• Chances are you will have to submit at least one essay as part of each application. Start to develop an outline this month.</li> </ul>

October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work on college essay.</li> <li>• File early action/early decision applications.</li> <li>• If you plan to visit a college campus, call ahead for an appointment with the admissions office and let your high school know you are visiting campuses. (attendance records)</li> <li>• Have a frank talk with your parents about college costs, how much they are prepared to contribute, and whether you should apply for financial aid.</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 1 – 15: Most colleges using “early decision” admission require test scores and applications between these dates. Students must apply by the early deadline and are notified by mid-December.</li> <li>• Work on preparing your college applications. Be sure to note when applications are due. Many colleges have a mid-November, December 15, and January 1 deadline. (Some colleges’ deadlines are in-house, not a postmark deadline.) It is important to fill your applications as soon as possible.</li> <li>• By November 27, turn in all requests to teacher or counselors for letters of recommendation or counselor portion of applications due between December 15 and January 15. (Requests turned in after Christmas break must still allow 3 weeks’ notice.) January 1, 10, and 15 are common college deadlines.</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to mail all college applications before Christmas.</li> <li>• During holidays, talk with friends and relatives who are attending the colleges on your list.</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pick-up a FASFA application from your counselor. File as soon as possible after January 1. January 1, 10, and 15 are deadlines for some applications to selective colleges. Others have deadlines later in January or February.</li> <li>• Make sure your counselor has your mid-year report form, if required by your college.</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch the admissions application deadline of February 1.</li> <li>• Have your mid-year grades sent to the colleges that require them.</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most selective colleges start to announce their decisions this month.</li> <li>• Receive college acceptances and compare financial aid offers.</li> <li>• If you have more than one offer, rank the colleges according to your important criteria. Does your final ranking match your gut feeling?</li> <li>• Pick your college and send in deposit by the deadline. <i>You should give a deposit to only one college!</i></li> <li>• Inform your counselor of any scholarships and awards received so you can be included in your school’s awards program.</li> <li>• Inform your counselor of your final college choice.</li> </ul>

May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify all the colleges of your enrollment intention.</li> <li>• Make sure you accept the financial aid offer according to the directions in your award letter.</li> <li>• If you received financial aid from other colleges you are not attending, be sure you let the colleges know of your decision not to attend.</li> <li>• Make sure you request a final transcript. This will assure that your final transcript is sent to the college you have decided to attend.</li> <li>• Final transcripts must also be sent to NCAA if you plan to participate in college athletics.</li> <li>• Make sure that you accept, in writing, the financial aid award from the college you decide to attend. Find out what else you need to do to maintain your eligibility.</li> <li>• Write thank you notes to everyone who helped you with the admission application process, and tell them of your decision. Also thank in writing, donors from whom you have received scholarships.</li> </ul>
<b><i>SEE YOUR COUNSELOR WHEN YOU HAVE QUESTIONS!!!</i></b>	

## **CAMPUS VISITS AND INTERVIEWS**

There is no better way to learn about a college or university – the faculty, facilities, spirit, academic atmosphere, and student values – than to visit the campus when college is in session. It is better to see through “your own eyes” rather than rely upon the word of a friend or the school’s literature.

The campus visit can be considered “*Educational Insurance.*”

- You are more likely to choose a college that is “matched” to your needs.
- You will have an opportunity to evaluate what students wear, how they live, etc.
- You will be able to observe where you will eat, sleep, study, worship, attend classes, and take part in campus activities.
- You are likely to do better work if you are in an environment which is consistent with your value system and needs.

### **PREPARING FOR A COLLEGE VISIT**

Arrange for your visit in advance by calling or writing the Admissions Office about three weeks in advance. Avoid being a “drop-in”. Arrange for an interview with an admission officer if this is required by the college or desirable on your part. Although summer

holiday visits are most convenient for you, it is preferable to visit while college classes are in session in order to experience the total environment of the campus.

Many schools have special weekend events and tours; some send brochures and registration materials to your high school and these can be found in your counselor's office.

Familiarize yourself with college catalogs/bulletins before visiting, so that you can ask intelligent questions when you arrive on campus.

Inform the college about your areas of interest, academic preparation, activities, etc. Indicate whether you have applied for admission.

If you will be interviewed while on the visit, know facts about your high school before visiting: percentage of graduates going on to college, average test scores, etc. This information can be acquired from your counselor.

To further prepare for the interview, summarize your personal data (interests, awards, activities, test scores, rank in class, etc.) You may also wish to take an unofficial copy of your transcript with you. You can get this from your counselor.

Give careful attention to your appearance, grooming, and conduct. The interview (if you are given one on campus) facilitates "putting a face" with a name. Often, notes are kept and placed in your application file. Remember to put your best appearance forward.

Try to do the following:

- Take an official admissions office tour (if offered) and then supplement with one of your own.
- Try to visit one or more classes.
- Talk to several college students (not just the tour guides). Ask them about the academic and social life on campus.
- Take your camera and notebook. Taking pictures of the campus will help you remember what it looks like when comparing schools. After you have visited, make notes concerning the following while the information gained is still fresh in your mind:
  - \* Impression of facilities and campus
  - \* Impression of faculty and students
  - \* Instructional program and regulations
  - \* Costs
  - \* Names and titles of officials you visited while there
- Stay overnight in a dorm.
- Have lunch in the dining hall.

## WHAT TO LEARN ABOUT THE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY AND WHAT TO ASK ON A CAMPUS VISIT

### *Classes*

1. What is the average class size for freshmen? Upperclassmen?
2. Who will teach freshmen courses—graduate assistants or faculty?
3. What is the faculty advisor system? How easy is it to meet with advisors?
4. Is there an organized professional counseling service for students?
5. What is the relationship between students – faculty – administrators?
6. Do faculty members seem accessible, friendly, and helpful?
7. What is the availability of courses in the field you are interested in? Are there special opportunities (study abroad, co-op, internships) and flexibility?
8. What are the college's top three programs or majors?

### *Campus*

1. Does the college campus appeal to you? Is it too large? Too small? Is it easy to get around? Do the buildings appeal to you?
2. How far is it from the local community? Is there easy access to shopping?
3. Is pride shown by students in maintaining a clean and well-ordered campus?
4. Inquire about campus security. Have there been problems in the recent past? What preventative security measures are in place? Will you feel reasonably safe living there?

### *Housing*

1. Are freshmen required to live in a dorm?
2. How many students per room? Are single rooms available?
3. How are roommates assigned? Can you request a particular roommate?
4. Are rooms fully furnished or do you need to bring certain items? Are refrigerators or microwaves allowed?
5. Are there study facilities in the dorm? How many computers are available? Will I need to furnish my own? Is internet access supplied to each room?
6. Are there quiet hours?
7. Are the dorms co-ed?
8. Are the dining facilities of the dorm satisfactory? What options are available for meal plans?
9. What percentage of students live on campus?
10. Are freshmen allowed to have cars on campus? If yes, what are the pros and cons?
11. How and when do I apply for housing? Is dorm space guaranteed to every freshman?

### *Religious*

1. If it is a church-related school, is chapel required?
2. Are there religious organizations to suit your purposes?

### *Social and Recreational*

1. What do students do on weekends?
2. What percentage of students remain on campus on weekends?
3. Are there fraternities or sororities? What percentage of students belong? Are there opportunities for independents?
4. Does the college have a social room or student union?
5. What varsity sports are played? Are there opportunities for participation? Are there intramurals?
6. Are the students active supporters of athletic events? Are the facilities adequate?
7. What cultural activities are available on or near the campus? Are speakers, plays, musicians, and other artists brought to the campus?
8. Are there recreation and workout facilities available for all students?

### *Admissions Criteria*

1. How will the college/university be evaluating the student? What criteria are used in the process? (Test scores, GPA, rank, quota, area of study, recommendations, activities, other subjective factors.)
2. Is the Admissions Office fully aware of the type of high school you attend?
3. What is the enrollment and composition of the student body?
4. What are the application deadlines and procedures?
5. What percentage of students applying are admitted for early decision and regular decision?

### *College Costs and Financial Aid Scholarship Opportunities*

1. What are the school's basic costs (tuition, room, board, fees, and books)?
2. What kinds of financial aid programs are available? What is the procedure for applying?
3. Are work opportunities or loans available?
4. Are there merit or no-need scholarships or grants available? Athletic or talent awards? Scholarships for upperclassmen?

### *Placement and Graduate Statistics*

1. What percentage of entering freshmen graduate in four years?
2. What percentage of freshmen return the second year?
3. What percentage of graduates continue on with graduate or professional study?
4. What national recognition have students received?
5. What are some of the placement statistics of graduates not pursuing professional study?
6. What employers visit campus?
7. Is there a career planning program for students?

### *General Atmosphere and Student Body*

1. What is the college's history, objectives, extent of traditions, direction of philosophy? How will it affect the students?
2. How is the student body as a whole? Are they happy, friendly, and independent?



3. How diverse does the student body appear to be geographically, ethnically, racially, politically, religiously?
4. What is the male/female ratio?
5. Where do the students come from?
6. What are the predominant styles of dress?
7. Do the students appear serious about their studies?
8. What are some of the regulations for all students?
9. What is the attendance policy?
10. In general, does the college appear to be relatively strict or fairly liberal in its operations?

#### AFTER THE CAMPUS VISIT

1. Write thank-you notes to the director of admissions and to any other staff or faculty who interviewed you or extended you courtesies while on campus. This should be done promptly upon returning home.
2. Review your evaluations and impressions.
3. Make a list of pros and cons.
4. Use “College Planning Worksheet” (p. 49) to keep a running comparison of colleges.
5. Begin rank ordering the colleges on your list.

### **INTERVIEW AND ESSAY PREPARATION**

Throughout the admissions process, you will constantly be asked to reflect upon yourself and your activities. The following questions are provided to help you begin thinking about your special talents and anything else your especially want the Admissions Committee to know about yourself.

1. Do you have any special interest which you feel is unusual or especially important to you?
2. Other than academics, what do you feel are your own special talents and how have you discovered them?
3. What do you feel are your weaknesses? What especially would you like to correct?
4. What are the qualities you most often admire in other people?
5. Have you been personally responsible for any innovations or constructive ideas adopted by your high school?
6. Do you consider yourself a leader or follower? On what basis?

7. Why do you want to go to college?
8. What is your attitude toward academics? Do you expect it will change in college?
9. What motivates you to learn?
10. Have you gone through a particular experience which has affected your life?  
Made a special friend? Taken an important trip? Had a joyful or sad experience?

## COLLEGE PLANNING WORKSHEET

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Quartile \_\_\_\_\_  
SAT Verbal \_\_\_\_\_ SAT Math \_\_\_\_\_ ACT Composite \_\_\_\_\_

College 1      College 2      College 3

### LOCATION

\*distance from home

### SIZE

\*enrollment

\*size of campus

### ENVIRONMENT

\*setting (urban, rural)

\*location & size of nearest city

\*religious affiliation

\*male/female ratio

### ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

\*deadline

\*tests required

\*average SAT scores

\*average ACT scores

\*rank in top 10%

\*rank in top 25%

\*rank in top 50%

\*acceptance rate

\*admissions notification date

### ACADEMICS

\*your major offered

\*special requirements

\*student/faculty ration

\*average class size

\*who teaches 1<sup>st</sup> year classes

\*average graduation rate

### COLLEGE EXPENSES

\*tuition, room and board

\*estimated total budget

\*application fee and deposits

### FINANCIAL AID

\*deadline

\*forms required

\*percent receiving aid

\*scholarship awards

### HOUSING

\*availability for freshmen

\*food plan

### FACILITIES

\*academic

\*recreational

\*other

### CAMPUS VISITS

\*when

\*special opportunities

## PREPARING FOR A SELECTIVE COLLEGE

### CHOOSE COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSES

Success in challenging college preparatory courses is the best preparation for a selective college. The more demanding your high school course of study, the better your chances for admission to and success at the selective college of your choice. Nearly all selective colleges demand a minimum of 16 units (full year courses) of college preparatory work. Use the descriptions below as a guideline for selective courses.

*English:* Four years. Skill in expository (essay) writing is considered very important.

*Mathematics:* Three or four years. Elementary algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra are the minimum mathematics courses required by most selective colleges. Courses in more advanced mathematics are considered very desirable.

*Foreign Language:* Two or more years, ancient or modern languages. (Three or more years is seen as quite desirable).

*Laboratory Science:* Two or more years, biology, chemistry, physics, or physical science. Three years often viewed as minimum for very selective colleges.

*Social Science:* Two or more years including U.S., European, modern, or world history, as well as government.

*Electives:* Three or more additional academic courses selected from the five course areas previously listed.

*Advanced Placement Courses:* Advanced placement courses demonstrate your ability to handle advanced work. Selective colleges view advanced placement courses as a sign of your willingness to accept a challenge and as evidence of your intellectual curiosity. The members of most college admissions committees will take special note of students with at least one advanced placement course on their high school transcript. However, this does not mean that you must take advanced placement courses to be admitted to a selective college.

*Other Courses:* Courses such as music, art, business, and computer courses are valuable supplements to those previously listed. They develop personal skills, promote aesthetic awareness, and foster recreational interests. However, they should not be chosen *instead* of college preparatory courses.

### WHAT COUNTS MOST?

Success in a demanding college preparatory program is the first priority for a selective college when it reviews an application for admission. Yet, it is the combination of courses, grade-point average, rank, standardized test scores, out-of-class experiences, and even the essay on the application that determines your preparedness for a selective college.

*Application:* You cannot be admitted if you do not complete an application to the college (or use the Common Application Form available for some colleges and universities.) Colleges review the application to learn about your in-school and extracurricular activities. Selective colleges also require an essay. They use the essay to learn about you and also to judge your ability to express your thoughts in writing. (Usually submitted in the fall of your senior year of high school.)

*Secondary School Record:* Your high school record carries a great deal of weight. Slightly lower grades in more rigorous courses may be more important than higher grades in an easier program. (Transcripts are usually submitted after first semester of your senior year in high school.)

*Scholastic Assessment Tests:* The SATs (or ACTs) are required by most selective colleges. However, the importance a college places on the tests varies greatly. Standardized test scores are seldom the most important factor in an admissions decision, and most colleges do not have cut-off scores. (Take no later than fall of the senior year.)

*SAT Subject Tests (formerly SAT II):* Selective colleges usually require or recommend specific Subject Tests. Some colleges consider them as factors in the admissions process; others use them to place students in the appropriate level of work when they enroll.

*Recommendations:* Recommendations from your high school guidance counselor, principal, headmaster, and/or teacher(s) are taken seriously by most selective colleges. The colleges use these as evidence of your potential, character, and classroom effort. Key people at your school who know you well are best able to give the college a fair and valuable assessment of you and your work. (Send to the college prior to the application deadline.)

*Out-of-Class Activities:* Selective colleges seek students with a wide variety of interests and experiences. These colleges realize that the intellectual ability and the varied perspectives of their students contribute to the overall educational climate. Community service, student government, athletics, overseas study, unusual hobbies, as well as participation in theatre, music, art, dance, or academic clubs are viewed positively by selective colleges. However, participation in theatre, music, art, dance, or academic clubs is viewed positively by selective college. However, participation in out-of-class activities will not compensate for a poor academic record.

*The Interview:* If a college you are considering encourages interviews, be sure to take advantage of the opportunity. The interview is an excellent way to determine if a college will really “fit” you. Admissions counselors at the college can answer most of your questions. In some cases an interview may make the difference in whether you are admitted or not. If you believe you may be a “marginal” candidate for admission to a specific college, request an interview. However, do your homework before you go. Have good questions and be sure you can explain why that college is attractive to you.

## COMMON ADMISSION DECISION DEFINITIONS YOU WILL WANT TO KNOW

**Early Decision** requires you tell a college or university at the time of application that, if admitted, you will enroll. You should apply under an Early Decision plan only if you know that you can make a well-reasoned, first-choice decision. Upon admission, the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1. You may apply to other colleges but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time. Colleges will respond to requests for financial aid at or near the time admission is offered. If admitted, you must enroll unless the financial aid award is inadequate.

**Early Action** permits you to apply to a college or university of your choice and receive a decision early in the senior year, well in advance of the normal spring response dates. Though you will hear early regarding your admission, you are not committed to attend and you may apply to other colleges. If you are applying for financial aid, you will follow the aid application deadlines set by the institution. You are not required to make a commitment before May 1, but you are encouraged to do so as soon as final choice is made.

**Regular Decision** is a plan in which institutions review most of their applications before notifying the majority of candidates of their admission. In this process, colleges set a deadline for completing applications and will respond to completed applications by a specified date. If you are applying for financial aid, you will follow aid application deadlines set by the school. You may apply to other colleges. You will not be required to make a decision regarding enrollment before May 1.

**Rolling Admission** is a term used to describe the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are received and offers decisions to students soon after they are made. If you are applying for financial aid, you will follow aid application deadlines set by the school. You may apply to other colleges and you will not be required to make a decision regarding enrollment before May 1.

**Wait List** is a term used by institutions to describe a process in which they may initially delay offering or denying you admission, but rather extend to you the possibility of admission in the future. Colleges offer admission to wait-list candidates if insufficient numbers of regularly admitted candidates accept their offers of admission. Please refer to the *Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities* for the rights of which you are assured if placed on a wait list.

## GLOSSARY OF COLELGIATE TERMS

**Advanced Placement** – Granting of credit and/or assignment to an advanced course on the basis of evidence that the student has mastered the equivalent of an introductory course.

***American College Testing Program (ACT)*** – This organization administers the scholastic aptitude examination known as the American College Test. The ACT is one of two major college entrance examinations.

***Associate Degree*** – A planned and sequential two-year degree program usually offered by a junior college.

***Bachelor Degree*** – Awarded by a college or university for a program of study generally requiring four years of study.

***Candidate Notification*** – The date by which a college notifies the candidate of the admissions decision.

***CEEB (College Entrance Examination Board)*** – produces the PSAT, SAT I, SAT Subject, Advanced Placement, and other test instruments.

***CLEP (College Level Examination Program)*** – A series of general and subject examinations for the evaluation of abilities of college applicants whose educational has been achieved in such non-traditional ways as independent reading, on-the-job training, or correspondence courses.

***College Work Study*** – A federally-funded program that enables college students to earn money from non-profit organizations assigned by the college.

***Common Application Form*** – A single application which is accepted by a number of colleges. After completing the original application form available from the college counselor, the student makes copies and mails them to those colleges which accept this type of application.

***Deferral*** – The final evaluation of a student is postponed to be included with the regular applicant pool. This applies to students applying Early Decision.

***Early Admissions*** – Admitting students of superior ability into college courses before they have completed the standard high school program.

***Early Decision*** – Some colleges offer students the opportunity of receiving action on their admissions applications in the seventh term of high school. There are two types of Early Decision plans: The *single choice plan* and the *first choice plan*. In the *single choice plan*, the student can make no other applications to other colleges until notification is received from the Early Decision College. In the *first choice plan*, the student may apply to other colleges, but names the Early Decision application as the first choice and agrees to enroll at that college and withdraw all other applications if accepted.

***ETS (Educational Testing Service)*** – The testing division of CEEB. Administers the SAT I and the SAT Subject.

**FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)** – The application required for grants, student and/or parent loans and financial aid at colleges.

**Grant** – An award of money given to a college student that requires neither repayment nor performance of a service.

**Honors Program** – Any program offering opportunity for superior students to enrich their educational experience through independent, advanced, or accelerated study.

**Hours** – A means of counting credits for course work; also may denote amount of time in class per week.

**Major** – The subject of study in which the student chooses to specialize; a series of related courses, taken primarily in the junior and senior years.

**PSAT/NMSQT**-- Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test

**Pell Grant** – Federal funds awarded to students based upon an eligibility index that determines financial need.

**Rolling Admissions** – This means that a college gives an admissions decision as soon as possible after an application is completed and does not specify an application or a notification deadline. Usually it is wise to apply early to colleges using this procedure, since further applications are normally not accepted after the admissions quota has been reached.

**SAT I (Scholastic Assessment Test I)** – A multiple-choice test that is designed to measure proficiency in mathematical and verbal ability and composition skills. The SAT I, administered by the College Entrance Examination Board, is used as an entrance examination by many colleges.

**SAT Subject Tests** – Tests given by the College Entrance Examination Board to measure ability in different subject areas. These tests are used by colleges for admitting and placing students in freshmen classes.

**Scholarship** – Financial award based on need, scholastic achievement, merit, special interest, or some special affiliation. This money may be given by a college, governmental agency, corporation, or a private group. It is an outright gift and does not need to be repaid.



## **TEN THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS**

- 1. RELAX – YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER WILL THANK YOU.**

Much of the stress that parents feel in the admissions process is self-induced. Choosing colleges, applying, getting admitted, and deciding where to enroll isn't easy. There is a lot of work involved, and it is drawn out over a long period of time. The best way to avoid stress is to play slowly and deliberately, using a calendar that builds in an ample cushion for time-sensitive endeavors.
- 2. MAKE A PLAN-OF-ACTION CALENDAR – AND STICK TO IT!**

Together with your son or daughter and his or her college counselor, construct an outline for the entire college admissions process, from initial browsing for information to deciding where to attend. Create an itinerary for visiting colleges and gathering your financial information for filing aid forms. Post the calendar in a handy location, touching base periodically with your child to monitor progress.
- 3. PLAN OUT YOUR TESTS.**

In this competitive admissions environment, standardized tests are becoming increasingly important. In addition to the SATs and ACTs, the most important tests for college admissions, there are many exams that are vital for getting accepted into the most selective universities. Student should plan to take some of these tests well before their senior year. The PSAT not only helps students practice for the SAT, it allows them to qualify for National Merit Scholarships. Advance Placement exams are administered in a variety of subjects. Passing the AP test means that students are able to receive college credit or even pass out of a certain college prerequisite courses. Students should take AP tests after they have taken AP courses. The SAT Subject Tests, formerly known as the Achievement Tests, are necessary for admissions to many competitive colleges; student should take each subject test immediately after they finish the class.
- 4. DON'T CONTACT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICES FOR YOUR CHILD.**

Colleges track the contacts they have with prospective students and applicants. It does not look good if the college has spoken with you and has never had any contact with your child, the actual applicant. (Sounds like Mrs. Smith really wants to come here!)
- 5. KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING.**

Set up file folders for each college to which your child is applying. Keep all correspondence within these folders. Document phone calls as well – always get the names and titles of those with whom you have had contact. Quick and comprehensive access to all pertinent materials will pay off in the long run.

**6. FILE ALL FINANCIAL AID FORMS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER JANUARY 1.**

Do all tax forms promptly so you can complete the required financial aid applications.

**7. BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER.**

Many employers, social clubs, and religious organizations offer scholarships. Be sure to check with these organizations early, before your child's senior year. Many of these programs have selection calendars that do not mesh with the college admissions calendar. Don't miss out due to lack of awareness.

**8. VISIT YOUR CHILD'S TOP COLLEGE OPTIONS.**

If you can, visit all of the colleges where your child is applying. There is no substitute for a campus visit, and college-produced videos are not "the next best thing." Never stick strictly to a "packaged" admissions visit consisting of an information session/interview and a slide show or tour. Balance the experience by lunching on your own in the dining hall and browsing around campus. When you do visit, make sure that you allow enough time on campus for your son or daughter to explore on his or her own – the perfect time for you to meet with a financial aid officer.

**9. BE AWARE OF NEW PRODUCTS THAT MAKE THE APPLICATION PROCESS EASIER.**

There is a free product on the market that all parents and students should know about. *Apply!* is a CD-ROM that contains applications to more than 500 colleges and universities in the U.S. Instead of the time-consuming process of requesting applications, waiting to receive them, and then tracking down typewriters to complete each application, students can now let a computer do the dirty work for them. In addition to the applications, *Apply!* also allows students to visit college web sites on the Internet, get information about financial aid and student loans, and develop a Hot List of colleges to apply to. New technologies are revolutionizing the admissions process and parents should always be on the lookout for them.

**10. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO COLLEGE; YOUR CHILD IS.**

There is no doubt that you should have some say in the matter, just remember to keep it in perspective. Parental input should focus on the mechanics of making a choice, not on the choice itself. Be frank and direct about any absolutes, such as financial limitations, but be low-key and reserved about the characteristics you think they want in a college. Think about helping your child choose the best college for *him or her*.

## **STUDENT ATHLETES**

If you are planning to participate in Division I or Division II college athletics, you must be certified by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse insures that each student meets certain academic standards in order to be eligible as a student athlete. You can contact the Clearinghouse at:

NCAA Clearinghouse – Form Processing  
P.O. Box 4043  
Iowa City, IA 52243-4043  
Phone (319) 339-3003  
FAX (319) 337-1556

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Secure a Clearinghouse eligibility form from the counselor's office near the end of your junior year.
2. Complete the student-release form and mail or fax the top copy of the form to the Clearinghouse along with the \$25 fee or fee waiver form.
3. Fill out an official transcript request form. Use the Clearinghouse name and address on the card instead of the college name and address. A transcript **MUST** be submitted from each high school you attended.
4. Turn in your transcript request form along with copies of the student release form to your counselor.
5. Send all scores (ACT/SAT) from the testing agency to the Clearinghouse. If you have already taken the ACT or SAT, you will need to have the testing agency send additional score report or reports to the Clearinghouse. There is a fee.
6. Earn a grade point of at least 2.00 (on a 4.00 scale) in a core curriculum of at least 13 academic courses.
7. Based on your grade point average, earn a certain composite score on the ACT or a specified combined score on the SAT.
8. Graduate from high school.
9. Fill and mail college applications.
10. In May of your senior year, complete the Final Transcript Request Form to have a transcript mailed to the NCAA Clearinghouse after graduation. (This is in addition to the final transcript mailed to the college you have decided to attend.)

## **THE APPLICATION**

**APPLY EARLY**

**MEET DEADLINES**

**BE ACCURATE AND COMPLETE**

**MAKE COPIES OF EVERYTHING YOU SUBMIT**

The following is a brief summary of the admission process:

1. Complete accurately the application and any other document as required by the college by the requested deadline. In some instances, the student will be required to write an essay or an autobiography. Students may also be required to include a photograph.
2. Attach the application fee, if required. Since this fee is non-refundable, it is advisable for the student to narrow choices before applying. Application fees generally range from \$25 to \$60 or more depending on the school.
3. Refer to the *Instructions for Submitting College and Scholarship Applications* (p. 64) to get your application processed efficiently. Give the school at least five working days to process a transcript request.
4. Take the required tests needed for admission and have the score report sent to the colleges by the testing company.
5. Complete any health forms.
6. Apply for housing by completing an application and submitting the required fee. The time to apply for housing varies from college to college. Some require that the student be accepted for admission before an application for housing is mailed to the student. Other colleges will accept housing requests prior to accepting the student. Housing is critical in many schools, and dorms may be assigned on a first come, first served basis. Many colleges will also assist students in locating off-campus housing if they are unable to place them. Most colleges require freshmen students to live in dorms.
7. Apply for financial aid. This is a separate procedure. Direct such requests to the Office of Financial Aid. *Please note:* Before a student can be considered for financial aid, he must be accepted for admission. An application for financial aid does not accept an applicant for admission and vice versa.
8. Some colleges may require recommendations from high school teachers and the principal or counselor. Select teachers who know you well to write letters which will be sent to the college along with the transcript and application.
9. Consult with the college admissions officer or the college catalog to be sure you have done all that is required before the deadline date for applications has passed.
10. Request letters of recommendation from your counselor and/or teachers at least three weeks before the application deadline.
11. If you have not received a response to your application or admission within a reasonable length of time, usually four to six weeks, contact an admissions counselor at the college. You may include a self-addressed, stamped post card with your application to verify that it has been received.

12. Arrange to have a final transcript sent upon graduation.

## RESUMES

Some colleges and most employers will require a resume as part of the application package. This resume is a concise summary of your education, accomplishments, experience, and skills. It serves as a personal advertisement, enabling a prospective employer or college admissions counselor to quickly get a sense of who you are – your goals, your interests, your abilities.

All resumes contain much of the same information, such as:

- Name, address, phone number, social security number, e-mail address
- Educational History
- Honors and Achievements
- Skills and Abilities
- Organizations and Activities/Leadership Positions
- Community Service
- Work Experience

However, the resume you write to accompany your college or scholarship application will probably vary in organization and emphasis from one you would send with a job application. Just remember that the overall purpose is the same – to generate interest in you by highlighting your achievements and strengths. The following tips apply to all resumes:

- Be brief. Limit your resume to two pages.
- Be neat and accurate. Proofread carefully. Remember that this is a reflection on you.
- Emphasize your most significant achievements. Put your “best stuff” first.
- Be specific, offering examples when appropriate.
- Be honest.

## GETTING STARTED

Before you begin writing your resume, you will need to gather and organize all pertinent facts about yourself. If you completed the Self-Assessment Worksheet and the Personal Activity Checklist from this handbook, you already have a great start.

*One Hint:* As you list individual activities, be sure to include your responsibilities. For example, as a club officer, you might have coordinated a community service project by contacting a local social service agency, recruiting and training volunteers designing publicity materials, developing a work schedule, and purchasing supplies.

## STUDENT RESUME FOR COLLEGE AND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

Your resume will be a useful supplement to a college or scholarship application. Of course, the *resume should never be sent in place of the comparable sections of the application form*, unless the application instructions specifically give you that option. The information to include in your resume is listed below and a sample resume illustrates the format. Always list the most recent or most significant activities first, and be sure to include dates and numbers of hours per week when appropriate. Keep in mind that the goal is to accentuate your strengths, so feel free to eliminate sections that do not apply to you.

- Name, social security number, address, phone number, e-mail address
- Major goal or objective (optional: include if you know your major)
  - ✓ Academic information
  - ✓ CEEB Code #
  - ✓ Graduation date
  - ✓ Class Rank
  - ✓ Senior Year Schedule
  - ✓ High School name, address, phone number
  - ✓ Counselor's name, if applicable
  - ✓ GPA
  - ✓ Test Scores
- Academic Awards and Honors. Include the date you received the award. Always list the most significant honors first.
- Athletic participation. Include dates of participation, leadership roles, special awards.
- Extra-curricular activities. Include dates of participation, responsibilities, leadership positions, special awards, time commitment.
- Part-time employment. Include dates of employment, name of company, responsibilities, hours worked per week. Emphasize leadership or supervisory experiences.
- Community Service. Include dates of participation, names of organizations, leadership responsibilities, and time commitment.
- Special conferences/camps/summer programs. Include dates attended, skills acquired.
- Special skills/training.

**SAMPLE  
RESUME FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS**

Mary E. Smith  
SS# 123-45-6789  
1011 Broadview Road  
Perspective, VA 24222  
(276)555-9999  
[mesmith@aol.com](mailto:mesmith@aol.com)

**GOAL:** To attend a four-year university and major in engineering

**ACADEMIC**

High School	Perspective High School 6101 Research Forest Drive Perspective, VA 24222 (936)273-4837 CEEB Code 441-471										
Graduation Date	May, 2008										
GPA / Class Rank	3.81/Top 25%										
Test Scores	SAT I Verbal 610 Math 690 ACT Composite 28										
Senior Schedule	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Marching Band</td> <td>Concert Band</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Government Honors</td> <td>AP Calculus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AP Physics</td> <td>Economics Honors</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advertising</td> <td>Marketing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>English IV Honors</td> <td>Computer Sci. II Honors</td> </tr> </table>	Marching Band	Concert Band	Government Honors	AP Calculus	AP Physics	Economics Honors	Advertising	Marketing	English IV Honors	Computer Sci. II Honors
Marching Band	Concert Band										
Government Honors	AP Calculus										
AP Physics	Economics Honors										
Advertising	Marketing										
English IV Honors	Computer Sci. II Honors										

**ACADEMIC AWARDS AND HONORS**

Mu Alpha Theta Outstanding Member	2000-2001
High School Physics/Engineering Competition	1 <sup>st</sup> place, 2007
Science and Engineering Fair in Houston	3 <sup>rd</sup> place, Jr. Computer Division, 2007
National Honor Society	Grades 11, 12
Two years Mu Alpha Theta Letterman	Grades 11, 12
Three years Academic Letter	Grades 10, 11, 12

**EXTRA-CURRICULAR**

Perspective High School Marching Band	Grades 9, 10, 11, 12
Woodwinds Section Leader. All-District	2007
Mu Alpha Theta	Grades 11, 12
Coordinator for After-School Tutoring	2007-2008
National Honor Society	Grades 11, 12
DECA	Grades 11, 12
Treasurer, Chairperson of fund-raising	2007-2008

**COMMUNITY**

Math Tutor, Barbara Bush Elementary School	Grades 11, 12; 2 hrs/wk
Math Tutor, Perspective High School	Grades 11, 12; 2 hrs/wk
Habitat for Humanity	Grades 10, 11, 12

**EMPLOYMENT PART-TIME**

Papa John's Pizza, cashier and delivery	June-August, 2007
Cochran's Crossing Village Community Pool, Lifeguard	June-August, 2006

**SPECIAL TRAINING**

Computer Literacy (MS Word, PowerPoint, Excel)  
Fluent in Spanish

## STUDENT RESUME FOR A JOB APPLICATION

Many employers require a resume as part of the job application. Most experts agree that there are two basic types of resumes: chronological and functional. The chronological format is the most traditional, beginning with the most recent accomplishment and emphasizing past employment experience. The functional resume, on the other hand, focuses on a person's abilities rather than his or her work history. It might be most appropriate for high school and college students who want to highlight their skills rather than their limited job experience the sample which follows uses the functional resume format.

Whichever format you use, you will want to include the following components.

- **Heading:** Your name, address, phone number, e-mail address
- **Objective:** In one sentence, tell the employer what type of work you are looking for
- **Education:** Name and address of high school, date of graduation. Include any additional training (i.e., workshops, seminars, internships) outside of high school. If you took any courses that particularly apply to the type of work you are seeking, include them. Mention courses that particularly apply to the type of work you are seeking. Mention GPA and class rank if they are especially impressive.
- **Skills and Abilities**
- **Activities/Leadership**
- **Awards**
- **Work Experience:** Begin with the most recent job, including the company name, address, and date you left the job. Include notable accomplishments. *Note:* Work experience also includes part-time or summer jobs and volunteer/community service activities.
- **References:** Most experts agree that references should not be included in the resume. Simply state that references are available upon request. However, you do want to have the name, address, and phone number of no more than three references available if an employer asks for that information. Be sure to inform these individuals that you are listing them as references.



**SAMPLE  
RESUME FOR EMPLOYMENT**

Mary E. Smith  
SS # 123-45-6789  
1011 Broadview Road  
Perspective, VA 24222  
(276)555-9999  
[mesmith@aol.com](mailto:mesmith@aol.com)

**OBJECTIVE:** Seeking a position in retail sales

**EDUCATION:** Perspective High School  
6202 Research Forest Drive  
Perspective, VA 24222

Graduation Date: May, 2008

Specialized Courses:

Marketing	Entrepreneurship
Advertising	International Marketing
Spanish IV AP	Computer Information Systems
Desktop Publishing Business	

**Skills and abilities:** Computer Literacy (Microsoft Word, PageMaker, Excel, PowerPoint, Photoshop)

Fluent in Spanish  
Attended summer study abroad program in Costa Rica, July, 2000

**ACTIVITIES/  
LEADERSHIP:**

Varsity Soccer Team Captain	Grades 10, 11, 12 2007-2008
Spanish Club Vice-President (Coordinated Cinco de Mayo Festival 1999)	Grades 11, 12
Students Against Destructive Decisions	Grades 11, 12

**WORK EXPERIENCE:**

Linens 'N Things Cashier	August 2006-Present 15 hrs/week
Office Depot Business Services (copy center) Associate	August 2005-August 2006

**REFERENCE:** Available on request

## WRITING YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY

### INTRODUCTION

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle that you must jump on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice. In fact, the essay is not a hurdle, but a rare opportunity; it is a chance for you to “talk” directly to the college’s admissions committee and to help them “see” you as a thinking and feeling person, rather than simply a set of impersonal statistics. Except for the interview, it is your only chance to share your thoughts, insights, and opinions; to highlight your accomplishments, and to convey your maturity and outlook on life. If you see the college essay in this way – as an opportunity – then it is clearly worth the effort to put some extra time, thought, and energy into writing it.

### PURPOSE OF THE ESSAY

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. It enables the college admissions office to evaluate your communication skills. Through your essay, they can assess the clarity of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions office to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and SAT scores can convey. A well-written essay can speak worlds about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination, and creativity. For the *admissions* staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual, different from any other student who is applying.

The choice of a topic is frequently not an issue, because many colleges and universities will either give you a topic to write about or present several specific topics from which you must choose about something that interests or concerns you. Regardless of whether you must respond to a prescribed topic or come up with one of your own, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

- Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible.
- The easiest topic to write about is yourself. Since one important purpose of the essay is self-revelation, it is no place to be shy or modest, although you should not exaggerate. If you choose to write about yourself, remember that little incidents and facts are often the most revealing of character and outlook.
- Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to a college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or off-beat essay is an excellent way to show your creativity. Be sure that whatever you write is in good taste.

### PREPARING TO WRITE

Before actually sitting down to write a first draft of your essay, spend some time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in

writing, what you want to convey, and the tone that you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the college admissions committee prefers. Finally, remember that organizing your thoughts and deciding on a framework *does not* mean you must be overly rigid at the start; leave room for flexibility and creativity as you begin writing.

### WRITING THE ESSAY

You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on content – communicating your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, reread it with a fresh perspective, and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling, and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft, you may wish to try it out on your family, friends, or English teacher. While the final product and final “voice” should be yours, they may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements.

Within this general outline for actually writing the essay, there are some “do’s” and “don’ts” which should be highlighted:

#### DO’S

- Do think “small” and write about something that you know about.
- Do reveal yourself in your writing.
- Do show rather than tell. By giving examples and illustrating your topic, you help bring it to life.
- Do write in your own “voice” and style.

#### DON’TS

- Don’t write what you think others want to read.
- Don’t exaggerate or write to impress.
- Don’t use a flowery, inflated, or pretentious style.
- Don’t neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, sentence structure).
- Don’t ramble – say what you have to say and conclude.

Your college essay, along with your high school record, standardized test scores, and extracurricular involvement, will provide the bases upon which the college makes its admissions decision. A thoughtful well-written essay can affect in a very positive way that final decision. Keep this in mind and take full advantage of the opportunity which the college essay affords you.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING COLLEGE AND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

ATTENTION SENIORS – Please read these instructions for having your college applications and letters of recommendation completed by your counselor.

1. Complete the application.
2. Copy the application for your records.
3. Mail application and application fee to the college.
4. Have scores sent to the college from the testing agency.

### FOR APPLICATIONS THAT *DO NOT* REQUIRE RECOMMENDATIONS OR COUNSELOR SIGNATURE

Complete steps 1 – 4 above, then:

5. Fill out transcript request form (available in counselor's office).
6. Turn in transcript form to your counselor at least **one week** before deadline.

### FOR APPLICATIONS REQUIRING LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FROM THE COUNSELOR:

Complete steps 1 – 4 above, then:

5. Fill out request for transcript, including complete mailing address of the college.
6. Attach transcript request form and any other part of the application that needs to be completed by school personnel and return to your counselor at least **three weeks** before the application deadline.

### FOR APPLICATIONS REQUIRING LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FROM THE TEACHERS:

Complete steps 1 – 4 above, then:

5. Complete teacher recommendation form (available in counselor's office).
6. Give complete recommendation form to teacher(s).
7. Follow-up with teachers a few days before your deadline.

**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR MATERIALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!! YOU DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE DEADLINE.**

**Also, you must pay close attention to school holidays and deadlines that occur during the Christmas holidays.**

If you have any questions, please see your counselor.

## STUDENT BRAG SHEET

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Standardized Test Information: If you have not yet taken the SAT or ACT, or if you plan to take them again, indicate the date here:

PSAT: Verbal \_\_\_\_\_ Math \_\_\_\_\_  
SAT: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Verbal \_\_\_\_\_ Math \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Verbal \_\_\_\_\_ Math \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_  
ACT Composite \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_  
ACT Composite \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Year Schedule: Remember that one factor in college admissions is your senior curriculum.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Please answer the questions below as thoroughly as possible; use additional sheets of paper if necessary. This information can be used in writing your college recommendation letters. The more information, the more personal the letter.

### ACADEMIC/PERSONAL

1. What two or three (academic/personal) accomplishments are you most proud of? Why?
2. What do you see as your greatest academic strengths? Weaknesses? Strengths and weaknesses in personal characteristics? For each strength you list, describe a time when you demonstrated that trait.
3. List three adjectives you would use to describe yourself. Why?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

List two adjectives your friends would use to describe you. Why?

- a.
- b.

4. List at least two teachers or staff members who know you well and who can speak confidently about your academic ability. What adjective do you think each would use to describe you? Why?
  - a.
  - b.
5. Of all the classes you have taken in high school, which have you enjoyed most? Why?
6. Which has been the most difficult for you? Why did you take it?
7. Describe one significant educational experience in detail.

#### EXTRACURRICULAR

8. Complete the attached Activities Sheet (or attach a resume if you already have one). THEN discuss which of the activities you listed (extracurricular, volunteer/community service, employment) has had the most meaning for you and why.
9. What are your reading interests? Discuss a book which has made an impact on you. Why?
10. Describe any special hobbies or interests.

#### COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

Colleges are interested in knowing how prospective students react to difficulty. Questions 9 – 11 will help your counselor address that in your recommendation letter.

11. How do you react to setbacks or disappointments? Describe any significant obstacles or hardships which you have had to overcome.
12. Are there any factors related to your grades that colleges should know?
13. Are there any factors about admissions test scores that you want addressed in your letter of recommendation?

14. List five characteristics you are looking for in a college. Why is each important to you? (Examples: location, college major, size, facilities, extracurricular activities, study abroad/internship opportunities, cost, student/faculty ratio, sororities/fraternities, etc.)
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.
  
15. List your college choices, in order of preference.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  
16. What college majors are you considering? Why? What have you done to explore these career interests? (Example: academic courses, employment, internships, etc.)

17. The chart below is from the teacher and counselor evaluation form of a college application. It is an example of how we will be asked to evaluate you. Imagine that you are your own counselor and complete the chart, rating yourself in comparison to all seniors.

<u>No</u> <u>Basis</u>	<u>Below</u> <u>Average</u>	<u>Average</u>	Good (above average)	Very Good (well above average)	Excellent ( <u>top</u> <u>10%</u> )	One of the top few encountered <u>in my career</u>
<input type="radio"/> Creative, original thought	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Independence, initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Intellectual ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Academic achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Written expression of ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Effective class discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Disciplined work habits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Potential for growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Academic Achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Extracurricular Accomplishments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Personal Qualities and Character	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recommend:	<input type="checkbox"/> With reservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly strongly	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastically

16. Discuss anything else that you consider special or unique about yourself, something that your counselor might not know, something you feel will help your counselor when she is writing a letter of recommendation.



# ACTIVITIES SHEET

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Extracurricular Activities

Organization	Your Position/ Year	Were You Elected?	Level	Description of activities	Hours per week/ Weeks per year (3/32=3 hrs/week/32 wks/yr)			
					<u>Fresh.</u>	<u>Soph.</u>	<u>Jr.</u>	<u>Sr.</u>
<i>Examples:</i> Speech/Debate Club	Committee Chair/Sr	Yes	Regional	Hosted Speech Tour	3/32	3/32	6/32	6/32
Basketball team	Captain/Jr	No	Local	Played forward	5/16	5/16		
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

## Community Service

Services/Volunteer Work	Your Specific Role	From-Through	Hours/Wk
<i>Examples:</i> Habitat for Humanity	Helped build houses	05/05-05/06	8
Hospital Volunteer	Helped nurses & visited patients	06/06-08/07	36
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

## Talents/Awards/Honors

Talent/Award/Honor	Description	Level	<u>Fresh.</u>	<u>Soph.</u>	<u>Jr.</u>	<u>Sr.</u>
<i>Examples:</i> Voice	Sang in school choir		X	X	X	
Regional Qualifier (Speech)	1 of 3 chosen for regional team	Regional			X	X
All-State Basketball Team	1 of 5 in state chosen for 1 <sup>st</sup> team	State			X	X
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Employment/Internship/Summer Activities**

Job/Title	Your Specific Role	From-Through	Hours/Wk
<i>Examples:</i>			
<i>Bagger</i>	<i>Bagged groceries, helped customers</i>	<i>06/06 – 05/07</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Exchange program</i>	<i>Spent 2 months with host family in Spain</i>	<i>06/05 – 07/06</i>	<i>n/a</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

# TEACHER RECOMMENDATION FORM

(Give to teacher at least three weeks before deadline.)

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHERS: Return Recommendation Letter(s) to Counselor

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

Name and address of school/scholarship    Office Postmark Deadline

STUDENTS: If you have submitted this form previously to the same teacher, it is not necessary to complete the information below, unless you wish to change or give additional information.

1. I think my academic strengths are:

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. I think my personal strengths are:

- a.
- b.
- c.

3. My most memorable academic experiences in your class were:

- a.
- b.

4. I am considering the following college majors because:
  - a.
  
  
  
  - b.
  
5. Things I would like the college admissions people to know about me are:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  
6. The specific things I hope you will discuss in this letter are:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
7. Additional information that might be helpful...  
*(You may attach a resume to this form if you wish, but remember that the teacher recommendation will focus on you as a student in this teacher's classroom.)*

Again, thank you. I know this is a big time commitment, and I appreciate it.

*Student's Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

## **FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION**

Financial aid programs help students pay for college. With financial assistance from the state or federal government, civic groups, and even the colleges themselves, students have found they can afford to go to college. Many resources are available in your counselor's office to assist students with finding money for college.

Check the college's catalog and financial aid office for more information about such programs. For eligibility determination, application, guidelines, the financial aid director at the colleges under consideration can answer questions you may have regarding the college's financial aid process. Consequently, the financial aid director is the primary contact for financial aid information at the colleges of your choice.

Because of the large number of aid programs and the lengthy titles of many programs, financial aid literature is filled with acronyms. This "alphabet soup" can be confusing to parents and to students applying for aid. Here is a list of the most common acronyms and financial aid terms and their respective definitions:

**ACT** – American College Testing, one of the largest nationwide, centralized services that analyzes a family's financial condition to determine the family's ability to pay all or part of a child's college expenses. ACT is one of the Multiple Data Entry (MDE) processors under contract with the federal government to process the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. ACT also developed and administers the ACT test, a college entrance examination.

**BEOG** – Basic Educational Opportunity Grant now called the Federal Pell Grant.

**CSS** – College Scholarship Service, a division of the College Board, one of the two largest nationwide, centralized services that analyze a family's ability to pay all or part of a child's college expenses. CSS is one of the MDE processors under contract with the federal government to process the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The College Board also developed and administers the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), a college entrance exam.

**CWSP** – College Work-Study Program, now called the Federal Work-Study Program

**EFC** – Estimated Family Contribution

**FAFSA** – Free Application for Federal Student Aid

**FFELP** – Federal Family Education Loan Program, formerly called the Guaranteed Student Loan Program. Federal Stafford Loans, and Federal PLUS Loans are parts of the Federal Family Education Loan Program.

**FPLUS** – Federal Plus loan program, which offers a type of loan made through the Federal Family Education Loan Program.

**FSEOG** – Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Program

**FWS** – Federal Work-Study Program

**GSL** – Guaranteed Student Loan, now called the Federal Family Education Loan Program. Federal Stafford Loans, and Federal PLUS Loans are parts of the Federal Family Education Loan Program.

**MDE (Multiply Data Entry) Processor** – National service agencies, such as ACT and CSS, that analyze a family’s ability to meet college costs.

**NDSL** – National Direct Student Loan, formally the National Defense Student Loan, now called the Federal Perkins Loan.

**PLUS** – One type of loan made through the Federal Family Education Loan Program, now called the Federal Plus Loan Program.

**SAR** – Student Aid Report

**SAT** – Scholastic Assessment Test, a college entrance examination developed by the College Board

**SEOG** – Supplement Educational Opportunity Grant, now called the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

**SIG** – Student Incentive Grant, the state matching program for federal SSIG funds

**SSIG** – State Student Incentive Grant

**TEG** – Tuition Equalization Grant

**Award Letter** – A letter sent from an institution’s financial aid office to a student indicating the kinds and amounts of financial aid being held in reserve for that student. The student is expected to sign and return the form if accepting the offer of financial aid.

**Campus-Based Program** – A financial aid program authorized by state or federal law in which the institution of higher education administers the funds. TEG is a state campus-based program; FSEOG, FWS, and the Federal Perkins loan Program are federal campus-based programs.

**Cost of Attendance** - An estimate of the costs facing a student at a particular college for an academic period. The estimate includes both direct educational costs (tuition, fees, books, and supplies) and indirect costs (room and board, transportation, and personal expenses). This information should be available in the school catalog.

**Estimated Family Contribution** – The amount of money a family may reasonably be expected to contribute toward a child’s education beyond high school. The ACT and CSS are the two largest nationwide services that calculate family contributions based on an analysis of financial data provided by the family.

**Federal Methodology** – A federal formula used to take family income and asset information and convert it into an estimate of the family contribution to cover college costs.

**Financial Aid Application** – A form provided by financial aid offices at institutions of higher education. Most financial aid offices require the student to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Many offices also ask students to provide additional information to help determine the student’s eligibility for institutional or state aid. To know which form(s) are needed at your institution, contact your financial aid office.

**Financial Aid Office** – An office at each institution of higher education with staff to counsel students on financial aid, to help determine student financial need and eligibility for financial aid, and to develop a financial aid package for a student. It serves as a clearinghouse for most types of financial aid and provides applications for most financial aid programs.

**Financial Aid Package** – A combination of financial aid awards tailored to the eligible student’s particular family circumstances and financial need. A financial aid package may include only one type of aid, such as grants, or all three types of aid – grants, loans, and work-study. Award letters are used by financial aid offices to inform the student of the financial aid package being offered.

**Financial Need** – An amount determined by subtracting the effective family contribution from the student’s cost of attendance. No student receiving need-based aid can receive more assistance than the amount calculated using this formula.

**Forgiveness Loan Program** – A program that relieves a student of the obligation of repaying funds borrowed through a loan program in exchange for services rendered.

**Gift Aid** – Financial aid provided without any “strings” attached. It is free money, not to be repaid, and includes grants and scholarships.

**Grants** – A form of gift aid. Grants are generally awarded on the basis of financial need, although some have academic requirements as well.

**Loan Repayment Program** – A program that repays outstanding student loans for individuals employed in certain fields. The Physician Education Loan Repayment Program is a loan repayment program.

**Loans** – Money loaned to a student or the student’s parents for educational purposes, usually at a set interest rate. Loans must be repaid. Lenders include schools, banks, or credit unions, and state agencies. Repayment on some loans does not begin until after a student leaves school or graduates.

**PROFILE** – PROFILE is a program of the College Board – a national, nonprofit association of schools and school systems, colleges, universities, and scholarship programs use the information collected on PROFILE to help them award nonfederal student aid funds. The PROFILE Application is based on the information you give when you register for the service. The PROFILE gives a complete picture of your family’s financial circumstances, including explanations about special circumstances, on a single application.

**Scholarship** – A form of aid usually awarded on the basis of a student’s academic or other special talent.

**Self-help** – Financial aid funds which the student must earn by working, or borrow and then repay (usually with interest). Work-study aid and student loans are examples.

**Work-study** – A part-time job arrangement for students. An example is the Federal Work-Study Program which provides job opportunities for students.

## **DETERMINING FINANCIAL AID ELIGIBILITY**

Grants, loans, and work-study are commonly called “need-based” financial aid. The student must show financial need to qualify for these programs. The amount of aid the student can receive is limited by the student’s need. The following equation is used to calculate a student’s need for financial aid:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Cost of Attendance} \\ (-) \text{Family Contribution} \\ \hline \text{Financial Need} \end{array}$$

The cost of attendance differs greatly from school to school. In general, state supported institutions are less expensive than independent colleges.

Most college catalogs include cost information. The full cost of school includes direct costs such as tuition, fees, books, and supplies, as well as indirect or living costs (room and board, transportation, and personal expenses).

Family income and assets are evaluated in the financial aid process to determine family contribution or the extent to which the student and his family can pay for the student’s education. It is the dollar gap between costs and family contribution that can be met with need-based grants, loans, or work-study. There is not enough federal or state aid to help everyone, so it is important to reserve it for those who could not go to college without it.



Awards from all federal aid programs are based on calculations of student need determined according to the federal methodology. This calculation, made by Multiple Data Entry (MDE) processors such as ACT and CSS, is based on information provided by the student and his family on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Applications are available in the counselor's office after January 1 of each year.

MDEs use the data from the Free Applications for Federal Student Aid, filled out by parents and students, to calculate the family's contribution. This calculation is then sent to the colleges, where it is used to make financial aid awards. *Example:* For a student to enroll for two regular semesters at a Virginia public institution, it would cost approximately \$ 9,214. In this example, we will assume the family contribution calculated by ACT or CSS was \$4,000; the student would document a need for \$

Cost of Attendance	\$9,214
(-) <u>Family Contribution</u>	- 4,000
Financial Need	\$5,214

The college financial aid office would try to provide a combination of financial aid to equal \$5,214. If the same student were to attend a Virginia independent college, which costs about \$13,678 for two semesters, the need would equal \$

Cost of Attendance	\$13,678
(-) <u>Family Contribution</u>	- 4,000
Financial Need	9,678

The college financial aid office would try to provide a combination of financial aid to equal \$9,678.

Since a family's financial situation can change from year to year, financial aid must be applied for annually. To be considered for aid, the student should contact the financial aid office of the college he or she plans to attend in the fall term of his/her senior year in high school. Students should be mindful of the deadlines for all financial aid forms.

#### GENERAL RULES

Students should always keep copies of forms they submit to the school, governmental entity, or lender as part of the financial aid process. This will help them keep track of what they have done and will make it easy for them to resubmit the required information if a form is lost. Students should keep in touch with the financial aid office where they are applying for aid. Most problems arise when deadlines are missed. The school would rather the student call too often than to not hear from the student until after deadlines have passed.

If the student does not qualify for aid one year, he or she should still apply the next year, especially if the family's financial situation has changed (a brother or sister now in college, a change in a parent's work situation, etc.) The student may qualify for a new financial aid program that did not exist the previous year.

## THE PROCESS

1. Get a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from the College and Career Center or the college financial aid office. Find out from your college aid office whether there are additional forms you need to complete to be considered for institutional or state aid. Complete the forms as instructed and mail them to the appropriate office(s).
2. Find out the college's priority deadline for applying for aid. This information will be in the school's catalog, or can be obtained by calling the financial aid office. Count back four to six weeks for processing time. Prior to that date, send your federal application to the processor as indicated in the form instructions. (For example, if the priority deadline is April 1, your federal application should be sent to the processor by mid February.) Federal applications may not be filed before January 1 of the year in which aid is sought. The application should be filed as soon as possible after that date. The form asks for federal income tax information. The relevant tax return is the one for the most recently completed calendar year prior to the college term for which aid is requested. If your family has not filed its income tax return early enough for you to use the tax form data in filling out the financial statement, use an estimate of the income tax information so that you can allow four to six weeks for the forms to be processed and still expect the results to reach your college before its priority deadline. If you use estimated data, plan on resubmitting actual data as soon as they are available.
3. In the appropriate area of the federal application form, indicate to which college(s) you want the analysis of the federal application sent. Be sure to give the correct spelling and addresses for your colleges of choice.
4. When the MDE completes the analysis of the financial information you have provided, the information will be made available to the colleges.
5. Contact the college financial aid office and make sure they are received all the information they need.
6. You will receive a summary statement from the MDE. This summary is called a Student Aid Report (SAR), or Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) and it should be reviewed very carefully. Follow instructions for making corrections if needed, and return the form to the MDE processor. Keep a copy of the corrected form.
7. Hand-deliver or mail the original SAR or ISIR (if it is correct) or a copy of the corrected SAR or ISIR to the financial aid office of the college you are interested in attending.
8. When the college finishes working with the SAR or ISIR information, it will be put together a financial aid package containing the types of aid they can offer each

- student. You will be informed of your aid offer via an award letter from the college.
9. If accepting the offer, you must sign the award letter, return it to the college and keep a copy. If rejecting the offer, let the school know immediately, so the financial aid can be offered to other applicants.
  10. The school will send you any additional applications needed to process your request for financial aid. Fill them out promptly and return them, keeping copies.
  11. If the family financial situation changes during the year and more or less financial aid is needed, inform the financial aid office. You will have to provide additional documentation to receive more aid, but schools may be able to provide more money.

Student financial aid may be grouped into the following categories:

- Scholarships or grants--These are gifts and require neither repayment nor performance of a service.
- Service Award--These awards are based on a service which the student renders the college, as in athletics or music.
- Work-Study Programs/Job--Part-time jobs are often available for students who need to earn money to pay college costs and for those who choose to work even though they have adequate financial resources. Some work-study programs alternate periods of work with academic terms. For information about co-operative education programs, check with the dean of the department in which you enroll.
- Loan--Loans are available from state and federal governments, educational foundations, industrial organizations, and private lending agencies such as banks, credit unions and savings and loan associations. Student loans must be repaid, usually with interest.
- Forgiveness Loan--Loans which do not have to be paid back if the student provides the services agreed upon at the time that the loans were obtained. If the recipient fails to provide the agreed-upon services, he or she is required to repay the loans, usually with interest.

## **EXAMPLES OF AWARDS AVAILABLE FOR VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

### **FEDERAL PELL GRANT PROGRAM**

- Previously named the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant Program
- Must show financial need.
- Must be undergraduate or vocational student (not graduate).
- May be enrolled on a less-than-half-time basis.
- Must be citizen or permanent resident of the U.S.

- Must be making academic progress.
- Maximum award determined by federal formula.

Students may apply by completing and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), available in your counselor's office or at college financial aid offices. In response to the student's application, the student will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) or an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR), which should be checked for accuracy and then sent to the financial aid office of the college to be attended.

#### FEDERAL SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

- Must show financial need.
- Must be undergraduate or vocational student (not graduate).
- Must be citizen or permanent resident of U.S.
- Must be making academic progress.
- Annual maximum is \$4,000.
- No aggregate maximum.

Application guidelines may be obtained through the director of financial aid at the college or university the student attends.

#### FEDERAL WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

- Must show financial need.
- May be undergraduate, vocational, or graduate student.
- Must be citizen or permanent resident of U.S.
- Must be making academic progress.

The work-study program provides part-time jobs for students. Student wages are paid in part by the work-study program; in part by the employer. Application guidelines may be obtained through the director of financial aid at the college attended.

#### FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN PROGRAM

- Formally called the National Direct Student Loan Program.
- Must show financial need.
- May be undergraduate or graduate student.
- Must be enrolled at least on a half-time basis.
- Must be citizen or permanent resident of U.S.
- Must be making academic progress.
- Annual Maximum Award:
  - undergraduate – depending on institution (about \$4,000)
  - graduate – depending on institution (about \$5,000)
- Aggregate Maximum:
  - Undergraduate – depending on institution (about \$15,000)

- Graduate/professional (including undergraduate years) - \$20,000+, depending on institution.
- Maximum repayment period is 10 years
- Interest subsidy while enrolled at least half-time
- 5% interest rate
- grace period is six months

Under certain circumstances, a portion may be cancelled for designated public service. Application guidelines may be obtained through the director of financial aid at your college financial aid office.

## **STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **WHEN YOU APPLY TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU HAVE RIGHTS**

#### Before You Apply

- ❖ You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial costs, aid opportunities, practices, and packaging policies, and housing policies. If you consider applying under an early decision plan you have a right to complete information from the college about its process and policy.

#### When You Are Offered Admission

- ❖ You have the right to wait to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid until May 1.

Colleges that request commitments to offers of admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1 must clearly offer you the opportunity to request (in writing) an extension until May 1. They must grant you this extension and your request may not jeopardize your status for admission and/or financial aid. (This right does not apply to candidates admitted under an early decision program).

#### If You Are Placed On A Wait List Or Alternate List

- The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait list, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing.
- Colleges may require neither a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition to remaining on a wait list.
- Colleges are expected to notify you of the resolution of your wait list status by August 1 at the latest.

### **WHEN YOU APPLY TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Before You Apply

You have a responsibility to research and understand the policies and procedures of each college or university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure that you understand the policies of each college or university regarding deposits that you may be required to make before you enroll.

### As You Apply

You must complete all material that is required for application, and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.

You should seek the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application period. Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.

It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.

### After You Receive Your Admission Decisions

You must notify each college or university which accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college that you wish to attend, but not later than May 1.

You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one college or university. The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a college or university and are later admitted to that institution. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify a college or university at which you previously indicated your intention to enroll.

If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and universities and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, the previously mentioned withdrawal of other applications presumes that the early decision college has notified you of any financial aid offering.

If you think that your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the president of the state or regional affiliate of the National Association for College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to: Executive Director, NACAC, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, or call (703) 836-2222, or FAX (703) 836-8015.

*(The information presented here is consistent with changes to the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice, approved in September 1994)*

## **BEST BOOKMARKS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GETTING INTO COLLEGE**

### **PICKING A SCHOOL**

- College Search: [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)
- College Search: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
- College Net: [www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)
- Peterson's Educational Portal: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- U101 College Search: [u101.com](http://u101.com)
- Go College: [www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)
- College Xpress: [www.collegeexpress.com](http://www.collegeexpress.com)
- US News.Com: [www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/cohome.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/cohome.htm)
- College Admissions: [www.collegeconfidential.com](http://www.collegeconfidential.com)
- US Universities, by State: [www.utexas.edu/world/state](http://www.utexas.edu/world/state)
- Super College: [www.supercollege.com](http://www.supercollege.com)
- Colleges.Com: [www.colleges.com](http://www.colleges.com)
- Access 10,000+ Universities/Colleges: [www.universities.com](http://www.universities.com)
- College Search/Tours: [www.collegesurfing.com](http://www.collegesurfing.com)
- C3Home Page: [www.c3apply.org](http://www.c3apply.org)
- Community College Web: [www.sw.edu](http://www.sw.edu)

### **ADMISSIONS TESTS**

- Test Prep: [www.petersons.com/testprepchannel/college\\_entrance.asp](http://www.petersons.com/testprepchannel/college_entrance.asp)
- College Entrance Exam: [ww.testprep.com](http://ww.testprep.com)

### **ONLINE APPLICATIONS**

- Online Applications: [www.applyweb.com/aw](http://www.applyweb.com/aw)
- CFNC – Online Applications: [www.cfnc.ort/onlineapps/info\\_onlineapps.jsp](http://www.cfnc.ort/onlineapps/info_onlineapps.jsp)

### **SCHOLARSHIPS**

- Grants Scholarships for College. Find free college scholarships: [www.thegoodshopguide.com/scholarships](http://www.thegoodshopguide.com/scholarships)
- Scholarships. Find free money for college. Scholarships and grants: [buckworks.com/scholarships](http://buckworks.com/scholarships)
- Sallie Mae – free scholarship service (The Planning for College Destination): [www.wiredscholar.com/index.jsp](http://www.wiredscholar.com/index.jsp)

- Scholarships for College Search Services – financial aid, grant: [www.financialaidofficer.com/scholarship\\_search](http://www.financialaidofficer.com/scholarship_search)
- Scholarship Search and Financial Aid Resource – find money for: [scholarships.borkescholar.com](http://scholarships.borkescholar.com)
- Peterson’s Education Portal – colleges, graduate programs: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- Scholarship Coach.Com – your personal advisor for winning college: [www.scholarshipcoach.com](http://www.scholarshipcoach.com)

#### COLLEGE LOANS

- College Scholarships, Loans, and Government Grants, Co.: [www.scholarships-education.com](http://www.scholarships-education.com)
- Student Loan Funding: [www.studentloanfunding.com](http://www.studentloanfunding.com)
- EDFUND: [www.edfund.org](http://www.edfund.org)
- College Loan Calculator – the best low interest Student Loans: [www.aseanreview.com](http://www.aseanreview.com)
- All Student Loan Groups: [www.allstudentloan.org](http://www.allstudentloan.org)
- Financial Aid.Com: [financialaid.com](http://financialaid.com)
- Sallie Mae: [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)
- College Loan.Com: [collegeloan.com](http://collegeloan.com)
- FinAid – Calculators: [www.finaid.org/loans](http://www.finaid.org/loans)

#### FEDERAL AID

- Understanding Financial Aid: [www.collegeview.com/financial\\_aid/understanding](http://www.collegeview.com/financial_aid/understanding)
- Types of financial Aid: [www.collegeview.com/financial\\_aid/types\\_fin\\_aid](http://www.collegeview.com/financial_aid/types_fin_aid)
- Financial Aid and Student Loans – Academic Info: [academicinfo.net/studentaid.html](http://academicinfo.net/studentaid.html)

#### ROTC

- Army ROTC: [www.armyrotc.com](http://www.armyrotc.com)
- Air Force ROTC: [www.afrotc.com](http://www.afrotc.com)
- Navy ROTC: [www.navy.com](http://www.navy.com)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ Education Benefits Page: [www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov)



## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The following sources were used to prepare this handbook:

Kaplan Handbook  
Princeton Review  
The Fiske Guide to colleges  
Yale Insider's Guide  
The College Board's Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees  
Rugg's Recommendations on Colleges Randolph-Macon College-Preparatory Program  
NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student Athlete  
College Scholarship Service (division of the College Board)  
Multiple Data Entry (MDE)  
National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)  
College Board's Calendar for the College Bound  
U.S. News College Directory  
U.S. News – How to Pay for College  
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administration (NASFAA)  
Department of Education's Budget Calendar  
Department of Education's State Resources  
U.S. News Private Aid Sources  
Service Academies Handbook  
National Association of Trade and Technical Schools  
Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)  
Occupational Outlook Handbook  
SCANS-U.S. Department of Labor  
State Occupational Information Department  
SAT web site [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)  
ACT web site [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

