



# **THE ROAD TO COLLEGE**

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Dear NWR student,

Now you are in high school. What do you have in store for this school year? Maybe trying to get a job to save up some money for next year? Or even trying to stay focused to keep that GPA on the right track.

Well let's add a little extra to your schedule. Preparing for college! You might ask, "What should I do?"

This guide has been prepared to provide you with critical information to assist you in the college admissions and financial aid process. If at any time you or your parents would like to schedule an appointment to further discuss your post-secondary options, please contact your school counselor or college and career counselor. Together we can guide you through this challenging process to insure that you find the college right for you.

The best of luck!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loraine A. Petrillo".

Loraine A. Petrillo, EdD  
Director of Student Personnel Services

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Introduction	4
Five Ways to Find A College	4
Factors to Consider When Choosing a College	5
Timetable for College Visits	6
Questions to Ask During the College Visit	6
Follow-up to the College Visit	7
Your Senior Year Plan	7
Categories of College Decisions	8
Testing Information	9
SAT vs ACT	10
SAT and ACT Tips	11
College Athletics	12
College Planning Calendar—9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	14
College Planning Calendar—10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	16
College Planning Calendar—11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	18
College Planning Calendar—12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	22
The College Essay	25
The College Interview	40
College and Career Planning Websites	45
SAT Coaching Websites	45
Financial Aid/Scholarship Websites	45
NAVIANCE	46
College Board.com College Search	46
Online Career Search	47
Financial Aid Information	48
Scholarship Information	52
Military Scholarships and Programs	53
Financial Aid Publications	55
Glossary of Terms	56
Important Telephone Numbers	58
Helpful Websites	58

## Introduction

Regardless of whether you are a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior in high school, you may think that post-secondary schooling is well down the road, and you'll have plenty of time to think about it later. However, there are several things you need to start doing right now to prove you are the type of student for whom admission counselors are looking.

\* **Think about different jobs and careers that interest you.** Consider your own interests, skills and talents. Talk to professionals who work in the field in which you are interested to get the inside scoop on what that career entails. This will give you a better idea as to whether this is what you would like to do.

\* **Start thinking about the type of school that you would like to attend.** Compare colleges and universities across the nation in terms of total enrollment, campus setting, average class size, tuition and the percent of attending students who receive financial aid. You can also take virtual campus tours.

\* **Make sure you have taken all of the necessary courses in school.** Just as there are certain requirements you must fulfill to graduate from high school, there are requirements for going on to higher education. Talk with your high school counselor and check informational brochures on schools you are interested in attending.

\* **Study hard!** You don't have to be the smartest student in your school or even earn the highest GPA. You do need to work hard and meet your own potential. You can show an admission counselor dedication and initiative by working hard to earn high marks and showing improvement. Don't be discouraged, and keep working!

\* **Get involved in extracurricular activities.** Don't overdo it and join several all at once, but select activities that interest you and allow you to exhibit your leadership skills. Consider sports teams, school clubs, community groups and church activities. Most admission counselors are looking for a well-rounded student; someone who can bring more than just "book smarts" to their school. Plus, it shows that you are responsible enough to handle the pressures of schooling while taking part in other activities.

\* **Take advantage of your school counselor's experience.** Your counselor can offer you school brochures, scholarship applications, admission applications, financial-aid applications, SAT dates and much more. Your school counselor will also be sending your high school transcripts to the schools to which you are applying, so it is important to form a good relationship early on. It's important to get started right away to ensure your place at your first-choice post-secondary school!

## Five ways to find a college

Picking a college is probably the biggest decision you will have to make. Here's some advice about what to do and a few things not to do:

1. Use NAVIANCE. This is an invaluable tool to discover your interests, possible career paths, and schools that offer the programs in your interest areas.

2. Don't stop there. You have interests and ideas that need more attention than fine print can provide. Make lists of the things you are looking for in a college, such as co-ed dorms or credit-transfer options. Make sure the schools you are considering meet those criteria. Then, check out each school's Web site to learn what else they have to offer. See what options they have for providing current student feedback to prospective students. Few people will relate to you as well as a college's current student.

3. Don't go to a school just because your friends are there. Start asking questions to find out which schools your classmates are considering. Ask why they think those colleges are good bets. Don't stop with high

school friends; get in touch with older people who attend college. Find out what they appreciate most about their schools, and then ask what they wish they would have known before they got there. What works for your best friend might not do it for you. You will make friends wherever you end up.

4. Don't rule out other regions. Don't be afraid to leave home, even for a school in an unfamiliar part of the country. Exposure to new things helps you grow; however, don't rush to move away just because you can. Community colleges and public universities in your state are likely to offer the best financial-aid packages.

5. Don't limit your options. College brochures are designed to sell you something: the college. Just because the book's pictures show things you like, doesn't mean it is time to sign the loan form. Small colleges can showcase intimate classes, but are fewer classmates what you want? Or if you grew up in a rural area, will you feel comfortable in a big city? Rule out schools that don't have the majors you are interested in, and use visits and personal feedback to pare your other options. Read brochures, visit campuses, and talk to students and advisers to help you decide where you will be the most comfortable. It could be 1,000 miles from home or right next door.

### **Factors to Consider When Choosing a College**

**Academics** Above all else, you attend college to receive an education. The type of academic atmosphere and variety of courses studied should be considered when choosing a college. Colleges can be ranked according to the selectivity of their admissions. For example, some colleges only take students with a 3.2 and higher grade point average and very high SAT scores. These institutions are considered very selective in their admissions. Other colleges simply require graduation from high school and/or lower SAT/ACT scores. These colleges have lower selectivity and some have open admissions.

You should try to match your academic abilities to the college's selectivity. If you are a very good student, then a more selective college may offer you the right amount of challenge and stimulation. If your academic record is weak, a less selective college may best fit your needs.

Also, colleges offer a variety of majors or courses of study. For example, if you are fairly sure you want to major in business, you should research the business department of the colleges you are considering. If you are unsure of what your major will be, then look for an institution that has a wide variety of majors.

**Size** Colleges range in size from 150 to 80,000+ students. There is a great difference between attending a small school (1,000-2,000) and a large one (20,000-50,000). Small colleges offer you a more personal involvement, a community atmosphere, and small class sizes. Large schools tend to be more impersonal, allow you to be more anonymous, and offer class sizes from 20 to 350+ students. You should ask yourself:

- Will I feel closed in and trapped at a small school?
- Will I welcome the personal, friendly atmosphere a small school affords?
- Will I feel lost and overwhelmed at a large school?
- Will I feel more independent and free at a large school?
- Will I want small or large class sizes?
- Would I like to have a great deal of interaction with my instructors during class, or would I prefer a large, more impersonal style of instruction?
- Will I want a campus that offers sororities and fraternities?
- Are the athletic facilities important to me?
- ***SCHOOL SIZE DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!***

**Cost** A major factor to be considered is the cost of attending college. The total cost of a year, as computed by the college financial aid office, includes tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. Total costs do vary widely.

While cost is undoubtedly very important, do not limit your choice of colleges to only those you can afford without financial assistance. Many of the more expensive private schools have solid financial aid programs, which may cover anywhere from 20% to the full cost, depending on your determined financial need. A good plan would be to choose several colleges, including one you can afford and several for which you need financial aid. Although financial aid may seem uncertain at times, limiting prospective colleges on a cost basis alone may exclude some excellent colleges from your list.

**Location** There are many reasons why the location of the college may be important to you. You should always consider the expense of travel, the need for independence versus the desire to stay near your family, and the effects of living in a particular climate.

When considering the location of a college, think about the campus setting. The physical environment of the college you go to may be very important to you. Some people prefer the social, cultural, and economic activities of a large city or metropolitan environment. A major metropolitan area can offer many benefits, but a student must adjust to the life style of a big city. A college or university which is located in the heart of a city is often comprised of multi-storied classroom buildings and high-rise dormitories. There are also many colleges which are in rural settings with widespread campuses located many miles from the nearest metropolitan area. The decision of a location and campus setting for your school should ultimately include those institutions where you will be most comfortable living for the next two to four years of your life.

#### **Timetable for College Visits**

- Visit schools beginning as early as April of your JUNIOR year.
- Return in the fall to spend a day visiting classes, talking with students, staying overnight, etc.
- Use a map and plan your trip to visit approximately two colleges per day.
- Call four to six weeks ahead of time to schedule your visit.
- If you would like to meet with a coach or faculty member in an area of interest, state that when you schedule your visit.

#### **Questions to Ask during the College Visit**

- What are the strongest departments at the college?
- What are the general class sizes?
- How do I compare academically with students who are currently attending this school?
- What do students do after they graduate? Do they go on to post-graduate studies? What percentage are employed upon graduation?
- What kinds of cultural, literary, and athletic activities are offered on campus?
- What percentage of students remain on campus during weekends?
- What kinds of living accommodations are there? Dorms? Apartments?
- Are freshman permitted to select their roommates? Have cars on campus?
- Are sports available for the average player? Ask about specific activities that interest you.
- What type of student is generally the most successful/happy at this school?
- What percentage of students receive financial aid?
- How much importance is placed on social activities and other extracurricular activities?
- What is the security policy on campus?
- How large is the library? What are its special features and resources?
- What support services are available to students? General counseling? Academic counseling? Tutoring? Post-graduation planning? Free health care?
- Is there assistance in locating off-campus employment during the school year and summer months?
- Is there a study abroad program?

## Follow-up to the College Visit

After your visit, make notes on the visit. Write down your likes, dislikes, important points to remember, and the names and titles of anyone that you met with. Write a letter of appreciation. This shows thoughtfulness, courtesy, and maturity. It reinforces the individual's memory of you.

## Your Senior-Year Plan

Maybe we should blame all of our college admission woes on the board game Life. Remember that game? A simple spin of the game's wheel got us a college degree! Real life, however, is not so easy.

Here is one of the coldest and hardest facts that high school students must face each year: The college applicant pool is getting larger and more competitive, while the number of spots for the incoming class mostly remains the same. It is a scary (but very possible) scenario that the college you seemed destined for at the beginning of your junior year may slip out of your grasp by the start of senior year.

A few years ago, the reason for receiving a rejection letter might have been poor SAT scores, lack of extracurricular activities or an early case of senioritis. These days, however, with more and more students recognizing the need for a college education, the simple reason is that even though you're good, colleges have an uncanny way of finding someone who is better. "Better" does not have to mean a higher average or longer list of accomplishments; it could mean that despite a very similar admission profile, an arbitrary decision must be made when it comes down to two good students for one spot. It is not uncommon for a top-notch student [to be rejected by] a college and a student with a weaker profile to be accepted if it means that the school will be satisfied with the nature of the incoming student population.

It is important to understand that the college admission process is not a conspiracy. The newest admissions phenomenon has above-average students scrambling to find spots anywhere in the nation's middle-ranked schools. It doesn't matter if you are the fifth generation to attend a certain school; there are no guarantees these days.

Here are some tips to help alleviate your growing pains:

### 1. Apply early

Get your application materials in as soon as possible. Colleges, above all, are businesses, and they need tuition money to survive. If you are a good match for a certain school, an application letter—and possibly some scholarship money—could be in the mail to you well before any date printed in the application materials.

### 2. Be aware of rolling admissions

These open-ended deadlines are double-edged swords. Think of them as no-cost insurance policies for colleges, who can see their numbers climb gradually but steadily as opposed to jumping dramatically in April and May if there were a set application deadline.

Consider this one terrific advantage: You'll know early on if they want you. You'll also know if they don't. If you're rejected, all is not lost. Although colleges won't advertise this loophole, you might be able to submit updated materials—or even a completely new application—later on in the admissions cycle. It's a long shot, but if a school's confirmed student numbers are not where they should be by the start of summer, a school that said "no" in December may say "yes" in June.

### 3. Don't assume anything

Point for point, you may very well match the profile for the school's ideal student. But don't paint your room in those school's colors just yet. If you are planning to major in a certain field, keep in mind that the school may already have reached its capacity for majors in that field and is currently recruiting for a different program. As a result, you may get a rejection letter simply because there are no more spots in the program at the time you applied, even if you do submit a stellar application.

#### **4. Be a frequent and courteous visitor to your high school's school counseling office**

Your admission to college is a sign of your high school's success as well as your own. If you experience a snag, your school counselor should help you regroup for another plan of attack, whether that means sending a new round of applications to be dispatched immediately or writing an essay to get you off the waitlist.

#### **5. Interview whenever possible**

A one-on-one meeting with a college's admissions counselor helps them fill in the gaps and clarify anything missing on the application. Nervous? A case of the jitters at this time in your life will most likely be considered charming and, unlike when you interview for a job four years from now, probably won't be held against you.

#### **6. Avoid the "S" words**

"Safety school," that is. If you feel like you're treading water in the application pool, don't expect your "safety school" to be there to bail you out. There are many ways that so-called safety schools can fail you. If a school that you are over-qualified for sees that you are also applying to a higher-ranked institution for which you are also a good match, the admissions committee may assume that you will attend the more prestigious school. Instead of wooing you with a large scholarship, the committee may send you a rejection letter, wanting to instead spend its time on students they think want to attend their school more than you do.

The college admission process is a crazy, nerve-wracking time of your life, but you'll make it. Think of it as an adventure, and try to keep an open mind as far as the possible outcomes. Real life might not be as easy to navigate as the game of Life, but it is certainly a lot more interesting!

### **Categories of College Decisions**

#### **Early Decision**

A very limited number of students are so sure of their college choice early in the senior year that they apply for what is known as an Early Decision. Students electing this plan **usually** agree to withdraw any other applications they may have submitted, if the first choice college informs them that they have been accepted for Early Decision. This may occur as early as November of your senior year. This process gets underway during the opening weeks of the school year and must be initiated by the student.

#### **Early Action Admission**

Many colleges have instituted a plan known as Early Action. This differs from Early Decision in that candidates may be rejected as well as accepted by December 1. This process also differs from Early Decision because students are not committed to enrollment. They have until the customary candidates' reply date to indicate their intention, i.e., May.

#### **Rolling Admissions**

Some colleges indicate decisions whenever they believe a student's credentials are complete. These decisions are made at anytime during the year, usually by February. In most cases, they do not require a response until May 1, and no commitment to attend is expected until that date.

#### **Open Admissions**

The policy of a college to admit high school graduates and other adults generally without regard to conventional academic qualifications, such as high school subjects, high school marks, and admissions test scores. Thus, virtually everyone who applies is accepted.

#### **Waiting List**

Students who qualify for admission but whose credentials are less strong than others in the applicant pool, may be placed on the Waiting List. This means that they might be offered a place after the May 1 Candidates Reply Date. The college knows at that time how many students plan to enroll. Some years, colleges never resort to their Waiting List because the original number of accepted and accepting students meets their quota for the fall.



## Testing Information

### **Should I take the College Board examinations?**

College Board Examinations are required or accepted for admission at most colleges. Students should check carefully the admissions requirements at prospective colleges to determine (1) whether SAT I or SAT II Subject Tests are required and (2) if the ACT is required.

### **What is the SAT I?**

The Scholastic Aptitude Test is a three-hour examination that measures the student's ability to communication and to reason with words and numbers. The SAT I is comprised of three sections: Critical Reading, Math, and Writing Skills. It is scored on a 2400 point scale (800 potential points per section), and includes a 30-minute response writing section. For more information, visit the College Board website, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

### **What are the SAT II Subject Tests?**

SAT II Subject Tests are one-hour examinations that measure the student's level of achievement in certain subject areas. Some colleges require or recommend three SAT II Subject Tests for admission and/or placement purposes.

### **How do I know what SAT II Subject Tests to take?**

You should take subject tests in those subject area sequences which you are completing this year and in any one-year subject that you will want to offer in your college admissions credentials. For instance, if you are finishing your study of a world language, you should take the subject test this year rather than delay it until your senior year when you will no longer be studying the subject. Also, if you are currently taking chemistry or a similar one-year course and wish to offer this test for college admission, you should take the subject test in May or June.

### **Which SAT II Mathematics Subject Test should I take?**

Most students take the Level I Mathematics subject test regardless of the number of years they have studied mathematics. The Level II test is narrower in scope and concentrates on more advanced work. It calls for a greater depth of understanding and sophistication.

### **Should I take the June SAT?**

Ordinarily, there is no need for a student to take the SAT I or II more than once before senior year unless you must do so to meet the requirements of a specific college (early decision), or if your scores appear low and inconsistent with your academic record. Then you may wish to repeat the test.

### **Should I take the ACT?**

The ACT examination is required for admission at many colleges, especially in the west and south parts of the country. Students should carefully check the admissions requirements at prospective colleges to determine (1) whether SAT I or SAT II Subject Tests are required and (2) if the ACT is required.

### **What is the ACT?**

The ACT is a four-part, two-hour and forty-five minute test of the abilities that students will need to succeed in college work. The test addresses the use of skills rather than the specific subject matter. The student is asked to complete a 25-minute Student Profile Section to indicate his/her grades, background, goals, personal needs, and non-classroom activities. For more information, visit ACT on the web at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

### **What areas of study are tested?**

**English**—measures the ability to understand and manipulate language

**Mathematics**—measures the ability to reason with mathematical abstractions

**Reading**—measures reading comprehension, special study skills, and problem-solving reasoning

**Science**—measures ability to interpret charts, graphs, and data

**Writing**—optional essay

**May I repeat the ACT examination?**

Re-testing is only recommended if the student was physically ill, emotionally upset, misunderstood directions, or attempted in any way to falsify his/her record during the initial examination. Scoring is weighted to compensate for different testing dates. A later testing would not likely improve your scores.

**SAT vs. ACT  
What are the differences?**

	<b>SAT</b>	<b>ACT</b>
How often is it administered?	<b>Seven</b> times per year	<b>Six</b> times per year
What is the test structure?	<b>Ten</b> -section exam: Three Critical Reading, three Math, three Writing, and one Experimental. The Experimental section is masked to look like a regular section.	<b>Five</b> -section exam: English, Math, Reading, Science reasoning, and Writing (optional). An Experimental section is added to tests on certain dates only, and is clearly experimental.
What is the test content?	<b>Reading:</b> sentence completions, short and long critical reading passages, reading comprehension <b>Math:</b> up to Geometry and Algebra II <b>Writing:</b> grammar, usage, word choice, and a mandatory essay	<b>English:</b> stresses grammar <b>Math:</b> up to trigonometry <b>Reading:</b> four passages, one each of Prose fiction, Social Science, Humanities, and Natural Science <b>Science:</b> charts, graphs, and data interpretation <b>Writing:</b> optional essay
Is there a penalty for wrong answers?	<b>Yes</b> , ¼ of a point for each wrong answer on multiple-choice questions.	<b>No.</b>
How is the test scored?	200-800 per section, added together for a score of 600-2400. 2-12 for the essay.	1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score. 2-12 for the Writing test.
Are all scores sent to schools?	<b>Yes.</b> If a student requests a score report be sent to specific colleges, the report includes the scores the student received on every SAT taken.	<b>No.</b> There is a “Score Choice” option. Students can choose which schools receive their scores AND which scores the schools see.
Are there other uses for the exams?	Scholarship purposes. Certain statewide testing programs.	Scholarship purposes. Certain statewide testing programs.
Need more information?	Educational Testing Service (ETS): 609-771-7600, ETS.org The College Board: collegeboard.com	ACT, Inc.: 319-337-1270, ACTstudent.org

Here are a few additional facts about the ACT exam:

1. Shorter test—the ACT clocks in at about 3 hours long, while the SAT will take you close to 4 hours to finish.
2. No guessing penalty—unlike on the SAT, there is no penalty for wrong answers on the ACT.
3. Score choice—you decide which ACT scores get sent to schools. You send only your best ACT scores—not so with the SAT.

4. Accepted by more colleges—the ACT is actually accepted at more schools than the SAT, including all of the most competitive schools.
5. Optional essay—the essay on the ACT is option. Some schools require it, some don't. On the SAT, you have to take the essay whether the colleges want it or not.
6. Fewer standardized tests—some colleges will accept an ACT score (with essay) in place of SAT Subject Tests.

### **ACT and SAT Score Comparison**

<b>ACT score</b>	<b>SAT score</b>
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	1290
17	1210
16	1140

### **SAT and ACT Tips**

What makes some people better test-takers than others? The secret isn't just knowing the subject; it's knowing specific test-taking strategies that can add up to extra points. Learn how test-makers think, what they're looking for and how to use this knowledge to your advantage. Smart test-takers know how to use pacing and guessing to add points to their scores.

#### **Tip 1: Pace yourself and keep moving**

Knowing that the scored sections of the SAT contain 78 verbal questions to be answered in 75 minutes means that you have nearly a minute to answer each question. If you use less than a minute to answer the easier questions, you'll have extra time to answer more difficult ones. Questions usually go from easiest to most difficult, so work your way through the earlier, easier questions as quickly as you can.

Don't spend too much time on a question before you've tried all the questions in that section. There may be questions later on in the test that you can answer easily, and you don't want to miss out on points just because you didn't get to them.

#### **Tip 2: The easy answer isn't always best**

Some answers may look complex, but could just contain extra material to throw you off. Read each choice carefully and really think about what the question is asking. The most obvious answer isn't always the best choice.

**Tip 3: Bring a watch**

If you're going to pace yourself, you need to keep track of the time. It's a good idea to bring a watch to the test. A word of warning: Don't use a watch with an alarm, or your watch will end up on the proctor's desk.

**Tip 4: Get ready for the test the night before**

The last 24 hours before the SAT or ACT is not the time to cram—it's actually the time to relax. The tests measure how you think and your grip on general high school curriculum, not what you can learn in one evening. Last minute cramming can be more confusing than illuminating.

There are, however, plenty of steps you can take in the final 24 hours. For one thing, don't do anything too stressful. On the night before the big day, find a diversion to keep yourself from obsessing about the tests. Maybe stay home and watch some of your favorite television shows, or go out to an early movie. Just make sure you get plenty of sleep. You should also prepare the following items before you go to bed:

**Registration ticket:** You should have received one in the mail.

**Identification:** A driver's license is preferable, but anything with your picture will do.

**Pencils:** Make sure you bring at least three #2 pencils; those are the only pencils that the scoring machines can read.

**Calculator:** Bring the calculator with which you're most comfortable with, but don't take a calculator that produces a paper tape or makes any noise at all. You won't be allowed to use it.

**Layered clothing:** By dressing in layers, you can adapt to extreme heat or cold.

**Wristwatch:** Your classroom should have an operational clock, but if it doesn't, you want to be prepared. Again, don't wear a watch that makes noise.

**Snack:** You're not allowed to eat during the test administration in your test room, but you are given a break. Bring a fortifying snack that you can eat quickly out in the hallway.

**Test dates**

Still have to register for these standardized tests?

Check out [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for SAT registration deadlines, information and test dates.

Go to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for ACT registration, deadlines, information and test dates.

**College Athletics**

Students interested in participating in college athletics should register with the NCAA Clearinghouse Eligibility Center at the **beginning** of their junior year and speak with their school counselor. Athletes will not be able to participate in College Division I or II programs without NCAA Clearinghouse approval, even if you have been accepted at the school. At the end of your junior year, a transcript will be sent to the Eligibility Center from the school counseling office. Additionally, a student should have their SAT and/or ACT scores forwarded directly to the Eligibility Center (**by using Code 9999**) whenever they take the SAT or ACT exam. For more information, please visit [www.naaclearinghouse.net](http://www.naaclearinghouse.net)

**OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- Division II has no sliding scale. The minimum core grade-point average is 2.000. The minimum SAT score is 820 (verbal and math sections only) and the minimum ACT sum score is 68.
- 14 core courses are currently required for Division II. However, beginning 2013, students will be required to complete 16 core courses.
- 16 core courses are required for Division I.
- The SAT combined score is based on the verbal and math sections only. The writing section will not be used.
- SAT and ACT scores must be reported directly to the Eligibility Center from the testing agency. Scores on transcripts will not be used.
- Students enrolling at an NCAA Division I or II institution for the first time need to also complete the amateurism questionnaire through the Eligibility Center Web site. Students need to request final amateurism certification prior to enrollment.

For more information regarding the rules, please go to [www.NCAA.org](http://www.NCAA.org). Click on "Academics and Athletes" then "Eligibility and Recruiting." Or visit the Eligibility Center Web site at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org).

Please call the NCAA Eligibility Center if you have questions:

Toll-free number: 877/262-1492.

NCAA Eligibility Center  
06/18/09 LK:cr

NCAA DIVISION I SLIDING SCALE CORE GRADE-POINT AVERAGE/ TEST-SCORE		
New Core GPA / Test Score Index		
Core GPA	SAT Verbal and Math ONLY	ACT
3.550 & above	400	37
3.525	410	38
3.500	420	39
3.475	430	40
3.450	440	41
3.425	450	41
3.400	460	42
3.375	470	42
3.350	480	43
3.325	490	44
3.300	500	44
3.275	510	45
3.250	520	46
3.225	530	46
3.200	540	47
3.175	550	47
3.150	560	48
3.125	570	49
3.100	580	49
3.075	590	50
3.050	600	50
3.025	610	51
3.000	620	52
2.975	630	52
2.950	640	53
2.925	650	53
2.900	660	54
2.875	670	55
2.850	680	56
2.825	690	56
2.800	700	57
2.775	710	58
2.750	720	59
2.725	730	59
2.700	730	60
2.675	740-750	61
2.650	760	62
2.625	770	63
2.600	780	64
2.575	790	65
2.550	800	66
2.525	810	67
2.500	820	68
2.475	830	69
2.450	840-850	70
2.425	860	70
2.400	860	71
2.375	870	72
2.350	880	73
2.325	890	74
2.300	900	75
2.275	910	76
2.250	920	77
2.225	930	78
2.200	940	79
2.175	950	80
2.150	960	80
2.125	960	81
2.100	970	82
2.075	980	83
2.050	990	84
2.025	1000	85
2.000	1010	86

## 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Planning Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

- Your schedule should include courses that challenge you academically. Your course selection should include rigorous and interesting electives in addition to required classes.
- Join fall school activities, including student government, athletic teams, clubs, plays, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review graduation requirements, honor roll requirements, attendance policy, discipline code, athletic eligibility, available clubs, and organizations, etc.
- Organize your homework and activities on a daily basis.
- Encourage your parents to attend Back to School Night and meet your teachers.
- Meet with your counselor to formulate a four-year plan.
- Register to take the PSAT test as practice for the SATs.
- **Athletes: Sign an athletic code and provide the medical forms to participate in athletics. This is to be completed each year with seasonal updates.**

### OCTOBER

- Volunteer for community activities.
- Prepare for the PSAT by studying their guide and taking practice test on NAVIANCE PrepMe PSAT.
- Make an appointment with your school counselor if you have not yet had a meeting this year.
- Review your Progress Report for the first marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.
- Take the PSAT test as practice for the SATs.

### NOVEMBER

- Read books, newspapers, and magazines in addition to assigned homework.
- Review your report card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.

### DECEMBER

- Explore potential careers through reading, searches, interest inventories, and course selection.
- Join winter school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review your Progress Report for the second marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

### JANUARY

- Rededicate yourself after the winter vacation to achieve better grades. Evaluate your study habits and organization, making changes where necessary.
- Begin planning for course selection for your sophomore year.
- Read unassigned newspapers, magazines, and books to expand your knowledge and vocabulary.
- Prepare thoroughly for your mid-term examinations.
- **Athletes: Meet with your counselor to discuss college entrance requirements and to assure compliance with NJSIAA and NCAA eligibility. 30 credits are needed to be eligible.**

**FEBRUARY**

- Review your report card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.
- Review your planned sophomore year courses with your parents and make final changes if necessary.

**MARCH**

- Join spring school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Develop a tentative four-year high school course selection plan. Plan for courses that challenge you academically and will expose you to a variety of career possibilities.
- Review your Progress Report for the third marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

**APRIL**

- Review your report card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.

**MAY**

- Take an interest inventory test to assist in your career planning process. Visit NAVIANCE on the NWR website to aid in your exploration.
- Review your Progress Report for the fourth marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

**JUNE**

- Prepare thoroughly for your final examinations.
- Make plans for the summer.

**SUMMER**

- Begin your summer reading for English class.
- Read non-assigned books, etc.
- Be involved in summer activities including sports, work, hobbies, community, and volunteer services.
- Begin to develop your high school "Brag Sheet" (a list of school and community experiences and awards). Plan how you will add to it this summer and in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

## 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Planning Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

- Your schedule should include courses that challenge you academically. Your course selection should include rigorous and interesting electives in addition to required classes.
- Reevaluate your high school progress. Make the changes necessary to improve your academic and activity record.
- Join fall school activities, including student government, athletic teams, clubs, plays, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review graduation requirements, honor roll requirements, attendance policy, discipline code, athletic eligibility, available clubs, and organizations, etc.
- Organize your homework and activities on a daily basis.
- Encourage your parents to attend Back to School Night and meet your teachers and school counselor.
- Register to take the PSAT test as practice for the SATs.
- **Athletes: Sign an athletic code and provide the medical forms to participate in athletics. This is to be completed each year with seasonal updates.**

### OCTOBER

- Volunteer for school and community activities.
- Prepare for the PSAT by studying their guide and taking practice test on NAVIANCE PrepMe PSAT.
- Take the PSAT test.
- Review your Progress Report for the first marking period and see your school counselor if you are having difficulty.
- Consider taking the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to begin focusing on a career direction. This three-hour aptitude assessment can be a very helpful career guidance tool that does not necessarily lead to a military career.

### NOVEMBER

- Read books, newspapers, and magazines in addition to assigned homework.
- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.
- Make an appointment with your counselor if you have not yet had a meeting this year. Request a copy of your transcript so you understand how your high school courses are recorded. Discuss your career and/or college plans with your counselor, and use the NAVIANCE program accessed through the NWR website to help with your planning.

### DECEMBER

- Explore potential careers through reading, searches, interest inventories, and course selection.  
Join winter school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review your Progress Report for the second marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

### JANUARY

- Rededicate yourself after the winter vacation to achieve better grades. Evaluate your study habits and organization, making changes where necessary.
- Begin planning for course selection for your junior year.
- Read unassigned newspapers, magazines, and books to expand your knowledge and vocabulary.
- Prepare thoroughly for your mid-term examinations.
- **Athletes: Review the “Eligibility for College-Bound Student Athletes”.**



- **Athletes: Meet with your counselor to discuss college entrance requirements and to assure compliance with NJSIAA and NCAA eligibility. 30 credits are needed to be eligible.**

#### **FEBRUARY**

- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.
- Review your planned junior courses with your parents and make final changes if necessary.

#### **MARCH**

- Join spring school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review your tentative four-year high school course selection plan. Your schedule should include courses that challenge you academically and will expose you to a variety of career possibilities.
- Visit local college and career fairs to continue your college exploration. Consider visiting a small, medium, and large-sized school to get a feel for college exploration.
- Review your Progress Report for the third marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.
- If planning to attend college, continue studying for the SATs. SAT scores will improve with practice. Take practice SAT tests on NAVIANCE PrepMe SAT.

#### **APRIL**

- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.

#### **MAY**

- Take an interest inventory test to assist your career planning process. Visit NAVIANCE on the NWR website to aid in your exploration.
- Review your Progress Report for the fourth marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

#### **JUNE**

- Prepare thoroughly for your final examinations.
- Make plans for the summer.

#### **SUMMER**

- Begin your summer reading for English class.
- Read non-assigned books, etc.
- Be involved in summer activities including sports, work, hobbies, community, and volunteer services.
- Visit some local colleges if you think college is in your future. Begin to get a feel for different types of college campuses.
- Update your high school "Brag Sheet" (a list of school and community experiences and awards). Plan how you will add to it this summer and in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Take practice PSAT tests on NAVIANCE PrepMePSAT.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Planning Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

- Your schedule should include courses that challenge you academically. Your course selection should include rigorous and interesting electives as well as the required classes.
- Your junior year grades are crucial because they are your last chance to influence the GPA and class rank that will be indicated on your college applications and transcripts.
- Reevaluate your high school progress. Make the changes necessary to improve your academic and activity record.
- Think about career plans.
- Obtain dates and locations of college fairs.
- Use NAVIANCE as a tool to help with your research into careers and colleges.
- Plan the next two year's extracurricular and community service activities.
- Join fall school activities, including student government, athletic teams, clubs, plays, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Encourage your parents to attend Back to School Night and meet your teachers and school counselor.
- Register to take the PSAT test which qualifies you to be considered for the National Merit Scholarship program.
- If considering taking courses at colleges or online during your senior year, meet with your counselor to discuss your options. Option 2 paperwork is to be completed and submitted to the Director of Student Personnel Services by October 31.
- **Athletes: Sign an athletic code and provide the medical forms to participate in athletics. This is to be completed each year with seasonal updates.**

### OCTOBER

- Prepare for the PSAT by studying their guide and taking practice test on NAVIANCE PrepMe PSAT.
- Take the PSAT exam.
- Develop a list of interests.
- Volunteer for community activities.
- Make an appointment with your school counselor if you have not yet had a meeting this year.
- Review your Progress Report for the first marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.
- Visit the local college and career fairs to continue to explore your options.
- If considering taking courses at colleges or online during your senior year, meet with your counselor to discuss your options. Option 2 paperwork is to be completed and submitted to the Director of Student Personnel Services by October 31.
- Attend Financial Aid presentation at NWR.
- Consider taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). This three-hour aptitude assessment can be a very helpful career guidance tool that does not necessarily lead to a military career.
- Study, study, study!!!
- **Athletes: Be sure to accrue the "13 core courses" that are needed to make "Official College Visits" and to qualify for an NCAA Athletic Scholarship.**
- **Athletes: Review a copy of the "Clearinghouse Guide". Discuss with your coach and parents.**
- **Athletes: Advise your coach that you are interested in playing college sports.**
- **Athletes: Advise your coach of any schools you are interested in attending.**

## **NOVEMBER**

- Meet with your counselor to discuss your post-secondary plans. Request a copy of your transcript so you understand how your high school courses are recorded. Review the transcript carefully to verify its accuracy.
- Develop a college/tech/career file to save important information.
- If planning to attend college, continue studying for the SATs. SAT scores will improve with practice. Take practice SAT tests on NAVIANCE PrepMe SAT.
- Involve your parents in the college choice process.
- Read books, newspapers, and magazines in addition to assigned homework.
- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.
- Put forth your best academic efforts.

## **DECEMBER**

- Use the results of the PSAT exam and materials to begin to develop range of colleges.
- Explore potential careers through reading, searches, interest inventories, and course selection.
- Join winter school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review your Progress Report for the second marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.
- Attend Alumni Day program.

## **JANUARY**

- Rededicate yourself after the winter vacation to achieve better grades. Evaluate your study habits and organization, making changes where necessary.
- Read unassigned newspapers, magazines, and books to expand your knowledge and vocabulary.
- Register for the SAT/ACT exams and possibly the SAT II Subject Tests. Verify if your potential college list includes schools that require the SAT II Subject Tests. Register to take the SAT II Subject tests in May if you are currently taking an Advanced Placement course.
- Take practice SAT tests on NAVIANCE PrepMe SAT and ACT tests on PrepMe ACT.
- Register for the Advanced Placement exams.
- Continue career exploration.
- Plan your senior year courses.
- Prepare for semester exams—colleges look at junior year grades.
- Establish and evaluate your personal college requirements (tuition, location, major, etc) and discuss with parents.
- **Athletes: Meet with your counselor to discuss college entrance requirements and to assure compliance with NJSIAA and NCAA eligibility.**

## **FEBRUARY**

- Begin college search.
- Research interesting and challenging summer courses, jobs, or activities.
- Check deadlines for Advanced Placement tests.
- Continue to use NAVIANCE.
- Review your planned senior year courses with your parents and make final changes if necessary.
- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.

## MARCH

- Join spring school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Make an appointment to meet with your school counselor for college counseling.
- Complete Collegeboard.com search.
- Email colleges for catalogs, view books, and other information.
- Make a list of colleges you plan to visit. Spring vacation is a good time because most classes are in session.
- Students wishing to attend any of the military academies should contact Senators and Congressmen and obtain an application from the Academies involved.
- Register for the SAT II Subject tests in May if you are currently taking an Advanced Placement course.
- Apply for proposed summer activities.
- Review your Progress Report for the third marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.
- **Athletes: Be sure to accrue the “13 core courses” that are needed to make “Official College Visits” and to qualify for an NCAA Athletic Scholarship.**
- **Athletes: Review a copy of the “Clearinghouse Guide”. Discuss with your coach and parents.**
- **Athletes: Advise your coach that you are interested in playing college sports.**
- **Athletes: Advise your coach of any schools you are interested in attending.**
- **Athletes: Contact prospective coaches to discuss athletics.**

## APRIL

- Develop a preliminary list of colleges.
- Request applications and view catalogs.
- File for military academies and ROTC scholarships.
- Begin college visits.
- Explore Early Decision/Early Action options.
- Visit some colleges, career schools, or technical schools over spring break. Call schools in advance and make appointments. VISIT, VISIT, VISIT!!!
- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.

## MAY

- Identify teachers whom you may ask to write a letter of recommendation.
- Take AP exams.
- Take SAT I and/or SAT II subject exams.
- Plan for a challenging senior year.
- Review your Progress Report for the fourth marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

## JUNE

- Take SAT I and/or SAT II subject exams.
- Plan thoroughly for your final exams.
- Make plans for the summer. Think about taking a college course, attending a seminar, or volunteering for a career-related activity.
- Submit a tentative copy of your “Brag Sheet” to your counselor. It can always be updated as needed.
- Approach teachers to write letters of recommendations (two are enough). Provide a copy of your resume.
- **Athletes: Submit NCAA Clearinghouse form if you intend to participate in college athletics. <http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/ncaa/NCAA/common/index.html> Request your transcripts electronically.**

## **SUMMER**

- Begin your summer reading for English class.
- Read non-assigned books, newspapers, and magazines.
- Visit schools on your list. Try to narrow the list to five to seven colleges to which you will apply. Obtain all applications and gather pertinent information on which you will base your final choice. Make careful notes and take pictures as the schools will tend to run together as you visit others.
- Complete application essay.
- Prepare your resume.
- Review for SAT/ACT. Take practice tests on NAVIANCE—PrepMe SAT and PrepMe ACT.
- Keep extracurricular and community service activities going.
- Update your high school “Brag Sheet” (a list of school and community experiences and awards). Plan how you will add to it this summer and in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Planning Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

- Your schedule should include courses that challenge you academically. Your course selection should include rigorous and interesting electives as well as the required courses.
- Reevaluate your high school progress. Make the changes necessary to improve your academic and activity record.
- Join fall school activities, including student government, athletic teams, clubs, plays, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Senior interview with college and career counselor. Discuss the application process, deadlines, and secure letters of recommendation from teachers and counselor.
- Review your transcript with your school counselor.
- Obtain dates and locations of college fairs.
- Consider carefully your responsibilities if applying for Early Decision/Early Action.
- Register for SAT/ACT exams.
- Take practice SAT/ACT tests on NAVIANCE PrepMe SAT and PrepMe ACT.
- Review requirements for essays and personal statements.
- Finalize essays and personal statements.
- Select final college choices.
- Approach teachers/coaches/administrators to write letters of recommendations (two are enough). Provide a copy of your resume.
- Review scholarship information for which you might be eligible.
- Encourage your parents to attend Back to School Night and meet your teachers and school counselor.
- Get off to a good start academically.
- **Athletes: Sign an athletic code and provide the medical forms to participate in athletics. This is to be completed each year with seasonal updates.**
- **Athletes: Meet with your coach to discuss your potential to play college sports.**
- **Athletes: If you have done already done so: Submit NCAA Clearinghouse form if you intend to participate in college athletics.**  
<http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/ncaa/NCAA/common/index.html>Request your transcripts electronically.
- **Athletes: If you have any questions, please see the Athletic Director, Mr. Simonetti or your coach.**

### OCTOBER

- Volunteer for school and community activities.
- Review for the SAT.
- Take practice SAT/ACT tests on NAVIANCE PrepMe SAT and PrepMe ACT.
- Complete applications for first-choice colleges.
- Schedule college interviews where appropriate.
- If applying for Early Decision, be aware of deadlines.
- Complete CSS Profile (if required by the college..this is the first level of financial aid)  
<http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>
- Review scholarship information for which you might be eligible.
- Attend Financial Aid presentation at NWR.
- Plan college visits and interviews. Develop a list of open houses and college tours.
- **Make an appointment with the college and career counselor to review applications.**
- If you are still evaluating career options, consider registering for the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). This three-hour test is helpful in self-evaluation and career guidance and does not necessarily lead to a military career.
- Review your Progress Report for the first marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

## **NOVEMBER**

- SAT I and/or SAT II subject test.
- Send Early Decision or Early Action applications.
- Keep organized and up to date!
- Research sources of private outside scholarships throughout the year.
- Read books, newspapers, and magazines in addition to assigned homework.
- Review your Report Card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.
- Don't ease up now. Colleges want a strong mid-year transcript report.

## **DECEMBER**

- Join winter school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- SAT I and/or SAT II subject test.
- All applications should be submitted to the college and career counselor by December 10 (remember Thanksgiving and all holiday breaks).
- All interviews should be scheduled (if applicable).
- Review scholarship information for which you might be eligible.
- Review your Progress Report for the second marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.
- Attend Alumni Day program.

## **JANUARY**

- SAT I and/or SAT II subject test.
- Maintain your academic grades. Colleges look unfavorably upon grades that drop in senior year.
- File for FAFSA after January 1<sup>st</sup> <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>
- Mid-year grades are forwarded to all colleges to which you have applied.
- Check NAVIANCE to verify that your schools have received your applications and the other support material. Some colleges provide the ability to check on the progress of an application on their website.
- Rededicate yourself after the winter vacation to achieve better grades. Evaluate your study habits and organization, making changes where necessary.
- Continue to read as much as possible.
- Advise school and college/career counselors of acceptances and non-acceptances as they become available.
- Advise college and career counselor of any scholarships that you have been offered/awarded.
- Review scholarship information for which you might be eligible.
- Visit colleges that you have not yet visited or that need a second look. Be certain to check out overnight visits and class visits for your most likely school.

## **FEBRUARY**

- Check AP exam deadlines.
- Have you sent all necessary forms and applications for financial aid?
- Check and apply for private scholarships.
- Advise school and college/career counselors of acceptances and non-acceptances as they become available.
- Advise college and career counselor of any scholarships that you have been offered/awarded.
- Review your report card. See your counselor if you need suggestions, tutoring, etc.

## **MARCH**

- Join spring school activities, including athletic teams, clubs, and service organizations. Take leadership positions when possible.
- Review scholarship information for which you might be eligible.
- Advise school and college/career counselors of acceptances and non-acceptances as they become available.
- Advise college and career counselor of any scholarships that you have been offered/awarded.
- Continue to explore colleges as thoroughly as possible.
- Send any new material to colleges which may help your application decision.
- Review your Progress Report for the third marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

## **APRIL**

- Advise school and college/career counselors of acceptances and non-acceptances as they become available.
- Advise college and career counselor of any scholarships that you have been offered/awarded.
- Decide where you wish to attend.
- Inform colleges if you will not attend.
- Make final decision.
- Send deposit by May 1.
- Review scholarship information for which you might be eligible.
- You should have received your FAFSA acknowledgement Student Aid Report (SAR).

## **MAY**

- Maintain your academic grades. Colleges look unfavorably upon grades that drop in senior year.
- Advise school and college/career counselors of acceptances and non-acceptances as they become available.
- Advise college and career counselor of any scholarships that you have been offered/awarded.
- AP exams.
- Fill out dorm requests.
- Register for college courses.
- Send original and signed SAR to your chosen college if not sent automatically.
- Review your Progress Report for the fourth marking period and see your counselor if you are having difficulty.

## **JUNE**

- Prepare thoroughly for your final exams.
- Advise school and college/career counselors of acceptances and non-acceptances as they become available.
- Advise college and career counselor of any scholarships that you have been offered/awarded.
- Make plans for the summer. Think about taking a college course, attending a seminar, or volunteering for a career-related activity.
- Final grades will be sent to the college you plan to attend.
- An unofficial transcript will be mailed with your final report card to you.

***HAPPY GRADUATION!!!***



## **THE COLLEGE ESSAY**

The application essay has been a part of college admission since the explosion of college enrollment after World War II. The essay is a special opportunity to introduce yourself. You have an attentive audience that believes this part of your application will give useful additional information. Although the admission committee will not choose or reject you on the basis of this single element, the essay can be a strong voice in your favor, a way to stand out for the rest, a determining factor for a "gray zone" application. So, the challenge is to have your own say with power and precision. Clearly there is pressure here, and it is natural for anything that is challenging to be a little threatening. With you as the subject, you actually have all it takes to succeed.

### **RECIPE FOR A DRAFT**

#### **How to Kick-Start Your College Essay**

Sometimes the hardest part of writing a college admissions essay is just getting started. Here's a quick exercise to get pen to paper (or keyboard to computer).

##### **Step 1: Think about yourself**

What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your best qualities? Are you a plugger? An intellectual? A creative type? Curious? Passionate? Determined?

##### **Step 2: Choose a positive quality you'd like to convey to the admissions committee**

Don't pick an event or something you've done. President of the Nuclear Awareness Club is not a personal quality. Focus on a quality of your mind or of your character. Complete this sentence: "I am a very \_\_\_\_\_ person."

##### **Step 3: Tell a story**

Set a timer for 20 minutes. Pretend you're taking an exam at high school and responding to, "Tell a story about an experience or time when you showed you were a very \_\_\_\_\_ person." Use the characteristic you identified in Step 2. Write or type non-stop for 20 minutes; force yourself to keep telling the story and what it reveals until the timer goes off.

##### **You're Done**

Okay. That's it. You've got a rough draft for your college application essay. Look at the college application forms and see what questions they ask. No matter what the questions are, you've already identified the important characteristic you want to convey to each college.

## **THREE STEPS TO A GREAT COLLEGE ESSAY**

### **You, in 500 Words or Less**

The college application essay is a chance to explain yourself, to open your personality, charm, talents, vision, and spirit to the Admissions Committee. It's a chance to show you can think about things and that you can write clearly about your thoughts. Don't let the chance disappear. Stand up straight and believe in yourself!

### **The Essay Writing Process**

Okay, boot up your computer and let's get to it. To write a college essay, use the exact same three-step process you would use to write an essay for class: first, pre-write, then draft, and finally, edit. This process will help you identify a focus for your essay, and gather the details you'll need to support it.

#### **Pre-writing**

To begin, you must first collect and organize potential ideas for your essay's focus. Since all essay questions are attempts to learn about you, begin with yourself.

- **Brainstorm:** Set a timer for 15 minutes and make a list of your strengths and outstanding characteristics. Focus on strengths of personality, not things you've done. For example, you are responsible (not an "Eagle Scout") or committed (not "played basketball"). If you keep drifting toward events rather than characteristics, make a second list of the things you've done, places you've been, accomplishments you're proud of; use them for the activities section of your application.
- **Discover Your Strengths:** Do a little research about yourself: ask parents, friends, and teachers what your strengths are.
- **Create a Self-Outline:** now, next to each trait, list five or six pieces of evidence from your life—things you've been or done—that prove your point.
- **Find Patterns and Connections:** Look for patterns in the material you've brainstormed. Group similar ideas and events together. For example, does your passion for numbers show up in your performance in the state math competition and your summer job at the computer store? Was basketball about sports or about friendships? When else have you stuck with the hard work to be with people who matter to you?

### Drafting

Now it's time to get down to the actual writing. Write your essay in three basic parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

- The introduction gives your reader an idea of your essay's content. It can shrink when you need to be concise. One vivid sentence might do: "The favorite science project was a complete failure."
- The body presents the evidence that supports your main idea. Use narration and incident to show rather than tell.
- The conclusion can be brief as well, a few sentences to nail down the meaning of the events and incidents you've described.

An application essay doesn't need to read like an essay about *The Bluest Eye* or the Congress of Vienna, but thinking in terms of these three traditional parts is a good way to organize your main points.

There are three basic essay styles you should consider:

- **Standard Essay:** Take two or three points from your self-outline, give a paragraph to each, and make sure you provide plenty of evidence. Choose things not apparent from the rest of your application or light up some of the activities and experiences listed there.
- **Less-Is-More Essay:** In this format, you focus on a single interesting point about yourself. It works well for brief essays of a paragraph or half a page.
- **Narrative Essay:** A narrative essay tells a short and vivid story. Omit the introduction, write one or two paragraphs that grab and engage the reader's attention, then explain what this little tale reveals about you.

### Editing

When you have a good draft, it's time to make final improvements to your draft, find and correct any errors, and get someone else to give you feedback. Remember, you are your best editor. No one can speak for you; your own words and ideas are your best bet.

- **Let It Cool:** Take a break from your work and come back to it in a few days. Does your main idea come across clearly? Do you prove your points with specific details? Is your essay easy to read aloud?

- **Feedback Time:** Have someone you like and trust (but someone likely to tell you the truth) read your essay. Ask them to tell you what they think you're trying to convey. Did they get it right?
- **Edit Down:** Your language should be simple, direct, and clear. This is a personal essay, not a term paper. Make every word count (i.e. if you wrote "in society today," consider changing that to "now").
- **Proofread Two More Times:** Careless spelling or grammatical errors, awkward language, or fuzzy logic will make your essay memorable—in a bad way.

## WHAT DO COLLEGES WANT TO KNOW?

Generally, there are three types of questions: The "you," the "why us," and the "creative." Here are tips and actual sample questions for each type. Don't assume that the questions are currently being used by a college (most colleges adjust questions annually).

### The "You" Question

Many colleges ask for an essay that boils down to, "Tell us about yourself." The school just wants to know you better and see how you'll introduce yourself. For example:

- "Please complete a one-page personal statement and submit it with your application." (James Madison University)
- "How would you describe yourself as a human being? What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to see flourish and which would you like to see wither?" (Bates College)

### Your Approach

This direct question offers a chance to reveal your personality, insight, and commitment. The danger is that it's open-ended, so you need to focus. Find just one or two things that will reveal your best qualities, and avoid the urge to spill everything.

### The "Why Us" Question

Some schools ask for an essay about your choice of a school or career. They're looking for information about your goals, and about how serious your commitment is to this particular school. For example:

- "Why is UVM a good college choice for you?" (University of Vermont)
- "Please tell us about your career goals and any plans you may have for graduate study." (Westfield State College)

### Your Approach

The focus is provided: Why did you choose this school or path? This should be pretty clear to you, since you probably went through some kind of selection process. Make sure you know your subject well. For example, if you say you want to attend Smith College to major in dance, the school will be able to tell how carefully you've chosen (Smith doesn't have a dance major).

### The "Creative" Question

Some colleges evaluate you through your choice of some tangential item: a national issue, a famous person, what you would put in a time capsule, a photograph. Here the school is looking at your creativity and the breadth of your knowledge and education. For example:

- "Do you believe there's a generation gap? Describe the differences between your generation and others." (Denison University)

## Your approach

Again, you have something to react to, a way to show yourself and write about your real views. Just don't forget the importance of writing an informed essay. For example, don't write about a fantasy lunch with a famous writer and get the titles of her novels wrong. Also, when thinking about how creative to get, use common sense. Being creative to the point of wacky is a risk you may not want to take.

## SOME SAMPLE ESSAY QUESTIONS

Here's a sample of recent college application essay questions. The answer is always within your grasp – just make your response *yours* and you can't be wrong.

- “The past is never dead. It's not even past.” So says the lawyer Gavin Stevens in Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*. To borrow from Steven's words, what small event, either from your personal history or the history of the world, is neither “dead” nor “past.”
- What one person, class, book, or experience would point to as having had a significant effect on the way you think about something? Explain.
- Think about all the things you hope or expect to gain from your college experience, and then tell us which two or three you would place at the top of your list if you had to make up such a list today. Be as specific or as general as you like.
- Please relate your interest in studying at \_\_\_\_\_University to your future goals. How do these thoughts relate to your chosen field of study?
- Think about a major challenge you have faced in your life. Describe how it has affected you, and more importantly, how you have changed as a result.
- Please write on a matter of importance to you. Any topic, and any form of written expression, is acceptable. As a guideline, remember that we are especially interested in issues of personal significance.
- What risks have you taken in life? What were the circumstances and the results? How have you benefited from risk taking?
- Develop a story involving dental floss, a cricket, and a tomato. Conclude your story with the phrase, “and that is how I saved the world.”
- Discuss an ethical dilemma you have faced and how you chose to deal with it.
- If you could invent one thing, what would you invent? Why? How would humanity benefit from this invention? What would be the negative effects, if any, of your invention?
- There are limitations to what grades, scores, and recommendations can tell about an applicant. We ask that you write a personal essay that will help us to know you better. In the past, candidates have written about their families, intellectual and extracurricular activities, ethnicity or culture, school and community events, people who have influenced them, significant experiences, personal aspirations, or topics that spring entirely from their imaginations. There is no “correct” response. Write about what matters to you, and you are bound to convey a strong sense of who you are. (*Please limit your essay to 500 words.*)

## ANALYZING TWELVE ESSAYS

The 12 sample essays that follow demonstrate a variety of strengths (focus, proof, simple language, structure, vividness) and weaknesses. **None is presented as a perfect or “correct” college essay. These sample essays are commonly available and readily familiar to college admissions officers. Plagiarism may result in your application being rejected.** These samples are meant to suggest the breadth of options you have in introducing yourself to a college. A look at these samples may help you avoid the pitfalls, enjoy the variety, and end up with an essay that gives a connected, strong, and vivid picture of you to the colleges of your choice.

### **Sample 1**

I guess it was inevitable that I’d be on hockey skates at some point in my life, but I did not expect that I’d become one of a rare group of female ice hockey officials before I even reached high school. Being born into a family of hockey players and figure skaters, it seemed that my destiny had already been decided.

Right from the beginning, my two older brothers and my father strapped me up and threw me onto the ice. I loved it and, in my mind, I was on my way to becoming a female Gretzky! But my mom had to think of something fast to drag her little girl away from this sport of ruffians. Enter my first hot pink figure skating dress! That was all it took to launch fifteen years of competitive figure skating. Even though figure skating soon became my passion, I always had an unsatisfied yearning for ice hockey. It took a great deal of convincing from my parents that competitive figure skating and ice hockey didn’t mix.

My compromise became refereeing ice hockey; little did I know that I was beginning an activity that would influence my character and who I am today. When I began, I would only work with my dad and brothers. Everyone was friendly and accepting because I had just started. I soon realized though that to get better I needed to start refereeing with people I wasn’t related to, and that’s when my experience drastically changed. An apologetic smile and an “I’m sorry” wasn’t going to get me through games now. As I began officiating higher-level games and dealing with more arrogant coaches, I suddenly entered a new male-dominated world, a world I had never experienced before. My confidence was shot, and all I wanted to do was get through each game and be able to leave. Sometimes I was even too scared to skate along the teams’ benches because I would get upset by what the coaches would yell to me. “Do you have a hot date tonight, ref?” was a typical comment that coaches would spit at me during the course of a game. In their eyes, I did not belong on that ice, and they were going to do whatever they could do to make sure no women wanted to officiate their games. I was determined not to let them chase me off the ice.

I made the decision to stand up for myself. I never responded rudely to the coaches, but I did not let them walk all over me and destroy my confidence anymore. I started to act and feel more like the 4-year certified Atlantic District Official that I am. There were still a few situations that scared me. One time I called a penalty in a championship game during the third overtime and the team I penalized ended up losing because they got scored on. I knew I had made the right call, even though I was unnerved when I saw the losing teams’ parents waiting for me at my locker room; for the moment I wished I hadn’t called that penalty. Although it was scary at the time, I stood my ground and overcame my fears. That was an important stepping-stone in my officiating career and in my life.

After four years of refereeing, I still can’t say it’s easy. Every game hands me something new and I never know what to expect. Now I have the confidence and preparation to deal with the unexpected, on and off the ice. I now also know to take everything with a grain of salt and not let it get to me. I have learned that life is just like being out on the ice; if I am prepared and act with confidence, I will be perceived as confident. These are the little lessons that I’m grateful to have learned as a woman referee.

### **Things to Notice About This Essay**

1. The author tells an interesting story about her experiences as a referee.
2. A sense of her personality—determination, flexibility, good humor—comes through in the narration.
3. Details like “Do you have a hot date tonight, ref?” make the narration memorable (we’d love to hear more of these kinds of details).

4. The essay needs a faster start. The first paragraph (three sentences) says the same thing in both the first and third sentences—and gives away the essay’s surprise in the second! A good revision would delete all of paragraph one and start at paragraph two.
5. There’s too much frame here and not enough picture. The essay needs further development, especially about the difficulties of becoming and being a ref, to keep it vivid.
6. The author should “dwell” in the meaning of the experience a little more at the end—“I wonder about...I also think...Sometimes I believe...” Significant experiences like this one, woven through many years of the author’s life, don’t mean just one thing—there are more insights and lessons to explore here.

## Sample 2

From the time I was able to realize what a university was, all I heard from my mother’s side of the family was about the University of Michigan and the great heritage it has. Many a Saturday afternoon my grandfather would devote to me, by sitting me down in front of the television and reminiscing about the University of Michigan while halftime occurred during a Michigan Wolverines football game. Later, as I grew older and universities took on greater meaning, my mother and uncle, both alumni of the University of Michigan took me to see their old stomping grounds. From first sight, the university looked frightening because of its size, but with such a large school comes diversity of people and of academic and non-academic events.

In Springfield High School, non-academic clubs such as the Future Physicians and the Pylon, both of which I have belonged to for two years, give me an opportunity to see both the business world and the medical world. These two clubs have given me a greater sense of what these careers may be like. In Future Physicians, I participated in field trips to children’s hospitals and also participated in two blood banks.

Currently I hold a job at Maas Brothers. This lets me interact with people outside my own immediate environment. I meet different kinds of people, in different moods, with different attitudes, and with different values. This teaches me to be patient with people, to have responsibility, and to appreciate people for what they are.

In the community I am active in my church Youth Group. As a high school sophomore, I was our church’s representative to the Diocesan Youth Fellowship. I helped organize youth group events, the largest being “The Bishop’s Ball”, a state-wide event for 300 young people. I also played high school junior varsity soccer for two years. As a senior I will be playing varsity soccer, but in the off-season. As a junior I coached a girls’ soccer team for the town. This gave me a great deal of responsibility, because the care of twenty-four girls was put into my custody. It felt very satisfying to pass on the knowledge of soccer to another generation. The girls played teams from other parts of Florida. Though their record was 3-8, the girls enjoyed their season. This is what I taught them was the greatest joy of soccer.

The past three years of my life have given me greater visions of my future. I see the University of Michigan as holding a large book with many unread chapters and myself as an eager child who has just learned to read. I intend to read a probe into all the chapters. The University of Michigan offers me more than the great reputation of this fine school, but a large student body with diverse likes and dislikes, and many activities, both academic and non-academic, to participate in. With the help of the University of Michigan, I will be successful after college and be able to make a name and place for myself in our society.

## Things to Notice about This Essay

1. It follows a general essay organization, with an introduction, several body paragraphs about different activities, and a conclusion that returns to the earlier idea of Michigan’s diversity.
2. It has no focus but rather jumps around from the school to the writer and from point to point. Notice especially the lack of transition from the first paragraph to the second: how did we get from Michigan’s diversity to the writer’s clubs?
3. The body paragraphs lack *proof*: What are these clubs and jobs, what did he do in each one, how many field trips were taken, and what was his role?
4. What’s Pylon? What does he do at Maas Brothers?
5. There are plenty of generalizations but no evidence to back up any of them. How did these activities give him a greater sense of the career world? “Participated” and “interact” are pretty vague words. Compare the discussion of Maas Brothers with the hockey ref’s story.

6. There is very little specific knowledge of what the University of Michigan has to offer.
7. The style is rather stuffy and awkward (“while halftime occurred”, “the care of twenty-four girls was put into my custody”).
8. Most important, nearly everything described here appears elsewhere on the application, under sports, jobs, extracurricular activities, and alumni connections.
9. The writer would be well advised to focus on *one* of the things discussed in this essay. Perhaps he could show the reader his work with the girls’ soccer team. What he did to make Jennifer and Gretchen and Courtney enjoy soccer even though they only won three of their games would be more vivid than a lot of talk about passing things on to future generations.
10. In short, the essay seems full of information and displays adequate form, but it lacks focus and *proof*.

### Sample 3

My most important experience sought me out. It happened to me; I didn’t cause it.

My preferred companions are books or music or pen and paper. I have only a small circle of close friends, few of whom get along together. They could easily be counted “misfits.” To be plain, I found it quite easy to doubt my ability to have any sort of “close relationship.”

After the closing festivities of Andover Summer School this past summer, on the night before we were scheduled to leave, a girl I had met during the program’s course approached me. She came to my room and sat down on my bed and announced that she was debating with herself whether she wanted me to become her boyfriend. She wanted my reaction, my opinion.

I was startled, to say the least, and frightened. I instantly said, “No.” I told her I on no account wanted this and that I would reject any gestures she made towards starting a relationship. I would ignore her entirely, if need be. I explained that I was a coward. I wanted nothing whatsoever to do with a relationship. I talked a lot and very fast.

To my surprise, she did not leave instantly. Instead, she hugged her knees and rocked back and forth on my bed. I watched her from across the room. She rocked, and I watched. Doubts crept up on me. Opportunity had knocked and the door was still locked. It might soon depart.

“I lied,” I said. “I was afraid of what might happen if we became involved. But it’s better to take the chance than to be afraid.”

She told me she knew I had lied. I had made her realize, though, how much she actually wanted me to be her boyfriend. We decided to keep up a relationship after Andover.

Even then, I was not sure which had been the lie. Now I think that everything I said may have been true when I said it. But I’m still not sure.

I learned, that night, that I could be close to someone. I also realize, now, that it doesn’t matter whether or not that person is a misfit; the only important thing is the feeling, the closeness, the connection. As long as there is something between two people--friendship, love, shared interests, whatever else--it is a sign that there can be some reconciliation with fear, some “fit” for misfits. And it shows that fear need not always win, that we can grow and change, and even have second chances.

I am still seeing her.

### Things to Notice about This Essay

1. It follows the standard essay pattern: an introduction (short), a series of supporting paragraphs for the body, and a conclusion (here, a summary paragraph and an end sentence).
2. It has a *focus*: his anxiety about relationships.
3. It has *proof*: the story of his conversation with a girl. Again, focused narrative development has made the proof vivid.
4. It is short, to the point, simple, and yet memorable. It is interesting without being grand, noble, or cosmic.
5. The style is simple and direct, employing short sentences and simple words to tell a simple story.
6. It coordinates and enriches an application full of academic achievements and high scores and grades. It is information definitely not found elsewhere in the application.

#### **Sample 4**

My childhood left three months ago on a plane to Austria.

It was a sad day, the end of June, when my baby cousins moved away. They had lived nearby for almost five years, and now they were moving to a country too far to visit with any regularity. My cousins were a fundamental part of my life; when they were not with me, they were on my mind. A week had never gone by without a visit from them and I doubted my life would be the same without them. They brought back the untroubled days of my childhood, through games, adventures, and silliness; and yet they helped mature me from an at-times selfish teenager into a responsible, mature adult.

My aunt and uncle moved to New Jersey from Boston, with their 1-year-old daughter Yasmeen, in the winter of 1998. They lived in an apartment on the side of our house and I was ecstatic to have our family, especially a baby girl, so close to us. Yasmeen had close friendships with each of my sisters, but I knew the one that developed between us was the strongest. As she began to work on her own and talk in full sentences, I realized the extent of my influence upon her. I would notice her syntax and mannerisms mimicking mine. I also noticed when she'd copy some of my more unpleasant actions, arguing with her mother after I had done the same. Yasmeen made me realize what been a role model really was.

When Maya was born in 2000, Yasmeen had a hard time adjusting. She was jealous of the attention we all paid to her new younger sister, so I did my best to pay attention to her when she might have not been noticed. Once Yasmeen overcame her jealousy, she was able to enjoy Maya's presence in our lives, like we all did. Maya grew up fast, too, it seemed. Each day, they got a little bit bigger, and I tried to take advantage of our times together, doing my best to free my schedule for my two favorite people.

My experience with Yasmeen and Maya has brought me to realize the importance of influential people. I know that I have helped Yasmeen and Maya grow, but "the babies" have made an even great impact on my own life. They have shown me how to be a parent, a sister, a cousin, a babysitter, a child, and most importantly, a friend. My relationship with my cousins has made me a better person—a more patient person, with the ability to tolerate endless questions and spilled juice; an exuberant person, able to have fun and be happy with others and sometimes, when I'd rather not, for the sake of others; a role model, showing the babies the ethics of life, right, wrong, and in between; and a compassionate person, able to be responsible, forgiving, and loving. Yasmeen and Maya made me know that I can and do affect people's lives and emotions. They are where I leave a lasting impression. And maybe, as they grow, they won't remember all the fun times we had, but I do know they'll remember the things I tried to teach them about life and love and family.

#### **Things to Notice about This Essay**

1. The essay has a sharp, strong beginning and a fresh honesty that conveys the events of the author's life and her outlook.
2. The style is simple and the topic is, too. But we believe in this story because of its simplicity.
3. The author proves that this has been a significant experience by the lessons she enumerates in the last paragraph.
4. The reader needs to know a little more about the circumstances of these moves from Boston to New Jersey to Austria, in order to understand the context of the essay.
5. A few more specific examples in the second and third paragraphs would give them the same strength and vividness as the "spilled juice" reference.
6. Having shared this interesting story, the author might find a few more insights and results to add to the last paragraph. The events seem affecting; the effects might be multiplied.

#### **Sample 5**

It has come to my attention that our nations, and nations like ours, have long been plagued by a mysterious occurrence. An occurrence that is as perplexing as it is frustrating, and as baffling as it is widespread, a problem that finds its origins at the very foot of our society. The problem of which I speak is none other than "The Orphan Sock Enigma," the constant disappearance of individual socks during the laundering process. It is a problem familiar to all of us, and also one to which we have unwillingly admitted defeat.

I recently decided that this puzzle had remained unsolved for too long, and resolved to find an explanation. (In the grand tradition of science, I refused to be discouraged by the basic irrelevance of my



cause.) But the truth that I uncovered is more shocking and fantastic than I could have ever imagined. My procedures, observations, and conclusions are as follows:

First, to verify that the problem exists, experimental and control loads of laundry were completely processed (put through the washer and dryer). In the experimental load (load with socks), by the end of the process, some socks were lost. But in the control load (load without socks), no socks were lost. Thus the problem was verified.

Next the progress of a load of socks was carefully monitored. The results indicated that sock disappearance occurs during the period of time when the load is in the dryer. Following this conclusion, a literature search was done and a very significant fact was uncovered: there is no mention of socks disappearing in dryers before the invention of dryers in the 1920s. All evidence clearly pointed to the dryer. And it is there that I would find the answer to the enigma.

Then, the actual experiment was done. In four separate trials, a number of socks (ten socks, or five pairs) were put through a normal drying cycle. The types of socks tested were selected by the highly accurate Harvey-Allman Principle Hierarchy and Zero Alternative Reduction Dimension (HAP-HAZARD).

Trial #1	#1	#2	#3	#4
Initial Mass 10 socks	265g	270g	276g	261g
Final Mass remaining socks & lint	261g	266g	271g	256g
Temp. running, empty dryer	65.56°C	65.56°C	65.56°C	65.56°C
Temp. running, dryer with socks	70.56°C	70.56°C	71.56°C	71.56°C
Net change in mass	4.0g	4.0g	5.0g	5.0g
<b>Net change in temp.</b>	5.0°C	5.0°C	6.25°C	6.25°C

The mass of the total load was measured prior to processing. Upon completion of the cycle, the mass of the remaining load plus the lint collected was also measured. In addition, the temperature of a running, empty dryer was measured, as was the temperature of a running, full dryer during the cycle.

In each and every trial, one or two of the socks were lost (each from a different pair). More importantly, in each and every trial, there was a net loss of mass and also a net increase in temperature. These results suggested a test hypothesis. Through the use of Einstein's equation for mass-energy equivalence,  $E=mc^2$ , the net loss of mass was completely and totally accounted for by the net increase in temperature. All the evidence clearly pointed to one unavoidable, momentous conclusion: all the socks that had been disappearing in countries all over the world had been directly converted to energy (or that there was something seriously wrong with my dryer). I have just begun to realize the monumental importance and far-reaching implications of my discovery. Quite possibly, it could completely change the way we live our lives (and do our laundry) for years to come.

From further experimentation, it seems that the amount of energy liberated (and mass lost) is directly related to the amount of the fiber Spandex in the sock.

But for some reason, the Spandex must be in the form of a sock for the reaction to take place. Therefore, by increasing the amount of Spandex in a sock, one can increase the amount of energy liberated. It also seems that the reaction can be controlled by the presence of different numbers of fabric softening sheets, similar to the effect of control rods in a nuclear reactor. In light of these discoveries, my house is now completely powered by a "Sock Reactor".

I estimate that just a few "Sock Reactors" could supply power to a city the size of Chicago with zero danger (provided a good supply of fabric softening sheets is on hand). This is because one hundred percent of the mass is completely converted into energy safely, easily, and without leaving any of that unsightly radioactive waste common to those other name brand reactors. Therefore, you and your loved ones are spared from that embarrassing radiation sickness and unpleasant aftertaste.

Originally, I had hoped to keep knowledge of this discovery fairly restricted, but I fear that word has leaked out. I have reason to believe there is a merger planned between Interwoven Hosiery and General Power's nuclear division.

Although I have not been able to explain why only one sock out of a pair can be converted, it appears to in some way relate to a black hole, a time warp, and static cling.

Albert Einstein, the man who first discovered the mass-energy equivalence, never wore socks. I think that just about says it all.

### Things to Notice about This Essay

1. It is written in essay form. It has an introduction, several paragraphs of proof, and a clear conclusion. However, it's also a creative piece that is not easily translatable into formulas or patterns.
2. It has a *focus*: the "Orphan Sock Enigma".
3. It is specific: the problem, the research, the chart and figure make it real and vivid. The author clearly knows how to plan, run, and record a scientific study, as well as how to spoof one.
4. This is a production piece that few seniors could do. However, if you can write with comparable flair and humor, it is a reasonable option for a college essay. It presents a good picture of the writer, his interest in science, his imagination and humor, how extensively he thinks about life, and how well he can write.

### Sample 6

"I'm so bad at this," she said, shaking her red-orange hair. Michaela was standing in the middle of the soccer field holding a ball in her hands. She was trying to juggle it off her thighs, but couldn't do it more than three times in a row.

"No, you're not," I said. "Lots of the other kids are having trouble too."

She shook her head again. Without even noticing the other kids scattering after their balls as if they were trying to capture little runaway pets, she stuck out her bottom lip.

"Listen Michaela," I said, "When I was your age, I couldn't even juggle the soccer ball, let alone juggle it three times."

"But you can juggle it like a thousand times now, and I can't even get to four. It's not fair," she said.

Michaela pounded her soccer ball onto the ground and sat down on it. Her elbows rested on her knees and her chin came down on her fists. I sat down next to her.

"Michaela, how old are you?"

"Ten," she said jutting her chin out slightly.

"Do you know how old I am?"

"No."

"I'm seventeen. I've had seven years to practice my juggling and to get better at it. That's all it takes, practice. All you have to do is try to juggle the ball five times every day, and more when you can do that. Eventually, you'll be able to juggle more than I can," I said, looking at her with conviction.

She was staring at the ground pulling tufts of grass up and piling little haystacks on top of her cleats. I could tell she wasn't sure whether to believe me or not. I got up and went to help some of the other kids, to give her a chance to think. Helping them seemed to mix encouragement in equal parts with leaving them alone with the challenge. One of the boys had given up altogether and was sitting on his soccer ball trying to peel an orange he'd kept from snack time. Our coach called the kids around. Michaela got up and pouted her soccer ball up to the rest of the group. Matthew ran up to me on his way to the group and handed me his orange.

"Will you peel this for me?" he asked.

"Sure," I said.

I took the orange. The skin was slippery and slightly more yellow than orange. I thought about how hard it is to peel an orange. You have to dig your fingernail in far enough to get under the peel, but not so far as to puncture the flesh. Each piece is independent and seldom do you get a piece that makes the next one easier to peel. I poised the orange on my fingertips and tried to peel the first few pieces. Those are toughest; the skin is always the hardest and won't stay connected. I could feel bits of grainy peel under my fingernails. The kids started walking to lunch.

"Here you go," I said handing the orange back to Matthew, with a thick peel "pull tab" rising from the top. "I got it started; you should be able to take it from here."

### Things to Notice about this Essay

1. The author chooses an appropriately focused topic: a brief moment, a short pair of conversations in a single day of summer work.
2. A sense of the writer's talents as a writer and as a teacher are clear from this story.

3. The strategy is subtle, leaving most of the conclusions to the reader.
4. The essay is very short, banking on the reader to get to the point.
5. This essay uses a high-risk strategy. Will the reader conclude the author is coming to college to play soccer or to study child development? The author is counting on the story to carry the meaning and omits the “From this I have learned....” Conclusion. It works, but just barely.

### Sample 7

I used to be a pretty deep guy. I watched foreign films, read Nietzsche, and stayed up all night “contemplating jazz”. I was Jack Kerouac living in a fire hut on top of Desolation Peak. I was Gary Snyder seeking enlightenment in a Buddhist monastery in Thailand. I was Ken Kesey, Jimi Hendrix, and Timothy Leary all rolled up on one gigantic mess of pseudo-intellectual, adolescent, fancy boarding school beat poet wannabe. I was a moron.

I blew off my schoolwork not because I was lazy, but because I thought that schoolwork was shallow, too insignificant for me, the vivacious intellectual, the dharma bum, the Zen lunatic wanderer. How could my teachers expect me to do their homework, when life around me was all so futile, so meaningless? I was sure that I was a tortured soul destined to lead a life full of angst and pain.

That was last fall, more than a year ago now. In February of last year, I left my hipster friends and their coffeehouse conversations behind, to move back to the suburbs of Philadelphia and my conservative, unhip public high school. Suburban Philadelphia is not the easiest place in the world to be sixties cool and stylish. There aren’t many smoke-filled coffeehouses or hippie wanderers. It’s clean here, upper middle class-you know, the Ford Explorer, Saturday evening Mass, country club for dinner scene. I came back to Philadelphia because it isn’t all that “hip,” because there is nothing “profound” to do. I came home to get myself together. It was time to grow up.

I’m not as cool as I used to be. I never do anything very exciting or off the wall, at least not by my old standards. My friends from boarding school have for the most part become nothing more than distant memories. They’re all off in New York City or Mexico pretending to work on their spirituality, but really just partying their lives away. I stay home a lot. I’m at the library a couple of nights a week. I read, I write letters, I do some painting.

Last weekend, I watched *The Color Purple* with my mom, collected some weather data for a chemistry project, and had a tea party with my little sister. I’ve been spending time with the people I met in my high school production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*, too. I feel balanced; I feel like myself. I no longer want to tend bar in Tangiers or meditate in Sri Lanka . . . all right, maybe I do, but not right now. For so long, I wanted to be other people, to be a cultural icon, a legend in my own time. But in reality, I’m nothing like Keith Richards. Honestly, I’m a little scared of sex and drugs. I worry about pimples, whether my parents are still happily married, where I’m going to be next year.

I came home, I grew up, I got my life back together. I’m still trying to find a balance, but I no longer feel like a reckless child. I was sure that I could get away from myself by just pretending that I was someone else. But right now, I’m not looking to be “on the road”. I’m pretty happy being right where I am.

### Things to Notice about This Essay

1. The story this writer tells seems sincere. It explains things from his transcript: a change of schools, improving grades.
2. The essay expects the reader to know all the references here to people (Gary Snyder, Keith Richards) and literature (*On the Road*, *Dharma Bums*, the line from poet Allen Ginsberg about “contemplating jazz”). The writer has a real depth of knowledge, which is good, but in some of these references, he may be expecting too little but in some of these references, he may be expecting a little too much from the reader . . . who won’t be 17.
3. The essay has a clear focus (“It was time to grow up”), extensive use of specifics and descriptive details, and a strong sense of a writer who has thought about his life experiences.
4. The essay doesn’t follow a traditional organization pattern and there are a few liberties with word choice and spelling (“wannabe”). A bit of a “risk”, this essay does match a writer who himself has taken chances. He tells his story with *grace* and conviction.

### Sample 8

As a seventeen year old, I don't yet have the experience or vision to know exactly what I want to accomplish. What I hope college will do for me is to broaden my base of knowledge with a solid liberal arts education. I would like to have the power to explore Drake's equation for extraterrestrial life while at the same time analyzing the similes used in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Or maybe I could investigate the applications of integral calculus or the themes of self-sacrifice in Shakespeare. From the combination of courses I decide to take, I expect to find one or two true passions that I can extract from the rest and then expand my knowledge exponentially in that field.

While I am working towards an academic concentration, I would like to focus my athletic efforts on swimming. At Springfield High, my intense training in swimming is interrupted every winter by my commitment to the basketball team. I am confident that concentrating solely on swimming will enable me to improve my past performances and times. If I could post a University record at Blodgett Pool and also find those one or two academic passions, I will have attained what I wanted from Princeton. And I am hopeful that in combining and completing these goals, I will have given something back to the school.

### Things to Notice about This Essay

1. The writer's use of specific topics from a liberal arts curriculum suggests that she has thought about what's going to go on in college (Drake, Virgil, calculus, Shakespeare). Weaker sentences are those lacking specifics (Sentence 2: "broaden my base of knowledge with a solid liberal arts education". Final sentence: "combining and completing these goals, I will have given something back to the school").
2. The writer is honest about her plans and her inability to predict a future at least four years away. But she is also positive about what she isn't sure of, emphasizing the future possibilities rather than her indecision.
3. It's a good idea to show a familiarity with the buildings and programs of the school to which you're applying. But if you write several essays like this one, be sure to proofread carefully. Isn't Blodgett Pool at Harvard?

### Sample 9

I knew I was going to Pittsburgh to play in a tournament. I didn't know I would be visiting Houston, Pennsylvania between matches. A rural suburb twenty miles outside the city's industrial hub, Houston is my father's hometown.

His family, he says, was "dirt poor" and barely able to sustain the house we found still standing—tired of living, it seemed and shedding its blue paint. My father pointed to a street corner blanketed with scattered sections of a local paper: "It was there . . . right there . . . where I stood and looked around me and saw that my future was contained in this town. It was painful to think of leaving. That street corner was the center of my universe." My father was the first person in his family—the first person in the little mining town—to go to college. As my father drove me along the unpaved back roads, he tried to find messages and axioms in the half-century old tale, but they did not answer the chain of questions jerked along by my consciousness: *How did he get out? Why did he come back? Why did he want to bring me here? Can I be as proud of my life as he is of his? What do I have to accomplish to gain such satisfaction? Do I have to do it soon?*

His stories stacked on top of each other like books on a desk. Each anecdote was another volume from his childhood and I was struggling to keep up with the reading. We passed the old house six times before he was ready to separate himself from Houston this time. The children playing outside the house tried to examine us through the tinted glass of our rented car and I shifted uncomfortably in my bucket seat. What opportunities did they have? What would I do with mine?

"Dad, these people are going to call the police if we keep circling the block."

Back at our hotel in Pittsburgh, I shouldered my racquet bag and followed my father up the staircase to our room. On each step, I tried to plant my foot exactly where he had put his.

### Things to Notice about This Essay

1. The organization is basically narrative. The writer's insights and reflections are incorporated into the story of her visit to Houston, Pennsylvania.

2. The writer does not tell the reader what this experience means. It's a risk, but she assumes we will figure out the connection between her father's experiences and her own. The italicized section in the middle guides the reader in understanding the end.
3. The writer supplies the details needed to create a picture of the place. The use of realistic dialogue adds credibility.
4. The essay tells only a small story, but it reveals the writer's ability both to think about her own experiences and to understand the experiences of other, different people.

### Sample 10

*Finding Nemo* is playing every hour on the hour this week. The theater teems with ornery, hyperactive kids for the half hour before each show. We have thirty minutes between each surge to sweep the floors of the concession stand before the next wave arrives to plead with their parents for four-dollar plastic buckets of junk food.

For \$4.75 an hour after taxes (a little more than one of those buckets costs), it isn't the best summer job and it only feels like the worst when *Finding Nemo* is playing. Usually we have plenty of time between shows to sweep up popcorn and replenish cups, buckets, and lids from the strangely-shaped cupboards underneath the counter where you have to grope blindly while on your knees. It's even more exciting when looking for the vats of simulated butter, which leave ominous oil-and-artificial-flavoring cakes on the bottom of the shelves. I used to order "butter topping" with my movie popcorn. After one day of pouring vats of it into the heating and dispensing machine, I decided I could never order it again.

I wish I could say it has been an educational experience, that it has made me a better person, or that for whatever reason I am secretly Forrest Gump. But the truth is that I spent the summer in an air conditioned theater with free movies to earn enough money to pay for gas. And during the summer, that's all that matters in a teenager's world.

### Things to Notice About This Essay

1. Asked to write about his summer activities, this writer tells the truth about his job in a clever and entertaining way.
2. There is no great lesson being taught but still the essay offers a clear focus-what he did last summer-and specifics that make the experience vivid and memorable to the reader.
3. The writer uses irony in the contrast of his wages and the popcorn purchases. He uses humor in explaining his recent decision to swear off "butter topping." Small touches like this are just enough (he's not applying to clown college).
4. Although the writer says he hasn't learned anything at the movies, his essay suggests that he thought carefully about his experience and can write about it clearly and with wit.

### Sample 11

I come from a country that is economically oppressed, a country where speaking against the government could cost one his or her life. There is no established government. "Survival of the fittest" is the regulation that we live by. There is no law enforcement, no government to complain to, and no police to call to one's rescue when one is being robbed or attacked.

The average Haitian only completes high school if he or she is fortunate. There exist circumstances in which a student has to leave school to work to care for their family even though work opportunities are insufficient. Times get harder and more unbearable as days go by. People get killed for no fixed reason, food becomes limited, and more and more children are getting ill.

My family consisted of eight people, all living on the second floor of a three-story house that included only two bedrooms. My sister and I slept in the same bed and in the same bedroom as my mother and two aunts. Paying the rent was difficult, for no one in the family was employed.

My grandmother left for the United States in 1988 when I was two years old. Since her arrival in America, she has stayed at someone's house. She was not yet familiar with the language, so it was difficult for her to find a job. She worked as a seamstress at home where she would make dresses for people and get paid, but that was not enough to establish her goal, which was to get her family here in America. Later, she worked as a housekeeper for five years; however, that job was also not sufficient. Knowing that she had children and grandchildren back in her native country, my grandma was determined to do everything in her power to take us out of our misery and bring us here to the land of opportunity.

Although my grandmother was going through harsh and difficult times, like finding transportation for work back and forth in the terrible weather, not being able to communicate with others, or being kicked out, she never forgot about us in Haiti. She would pay our house rent and send money for our schooling and for food. Also she filed for citizenship on our account, so it could be a quicker process of coming to the United States. After seven long years we were able to come to the U.S. November 28, 1995 was such an emotional and joyous day for the entire Joseph family.

There is nothing more that I want in this world than to thank my grandmother and truly show her how important she is to me. She is an exceptional, strong, and independent woman. As of now I am doing my best to attend a four-year college. My love for the community has influenced my career choice. I have resolved in my heart that no matter what I do I must be capable of providing assistance for others. Caring for others has always been my passion and going into a medical field or health profession is what I am striving for. The best way I see fit to give back to a community that has given so much to me is by becoming a nurse practitioner. Hopefully, I will be my grandmother's first grandchild to successfully graduate college. Being able to accomplish all my scholastic goals, I believe, I will not only honor my grandmother but also show her my appreciation for all the hard work she has done for me.

### **Things to Notice About This Essay**

1. This writer gives the reader a strong opening sentence that makes us want to keep reading.
2. The essay describes the author's family but from this the reader can derive a sense of the author's own determination and personality.
3. The essay is well organized, based on the chronology of her grandmother's story, and makes a clear connection between the events of the author's life and her future plans.
4. The essay is quite long; careful editing might keep the important parts and tell the story in fewer words.
5. We learn about the grandmother but it is not the grandmother's generosity, commitment, or love that matter; the reader wants to know more about the author of this essay herself. How did she come to the United States? When did she learn English? How does she live now?
6. What evidence proves that the grandmother's actions have shaped the author's life? You can't borrow someone else's suffering. All essays need proof for the claim; the author's own past (not planned future) actions are the missing pieces in this narration.

### **Sample 12**

A person who influenced me was Mrs. Baldwin, my best friend's mother. Mrs. Baldwin was always around whenever I went over to see Stacey. She was from Alabama and she always looked up from whatever she was making and said "Hey girl!" to me when I came in the kitchen door. I was shocked when my Mom told me that Mrs. Baldwin had cancer. I couldn't believe that anyone I knew, anyone I cared about, could be dying.

It was very hard for everyone as Mrs. Baldwin got sicker. I think her whole family was in shock. She went to the hospital for treatments and for chemotherapy but I knew that things weren't getting better.

Mrs. Baldwin died at home just before Thanksgiving last year. I still think about her often and I know things are completely different for her kids and her husband. Stacey and I don't ever talk about it but I can tell things have changed.

When Mrs. Baldwin died, I realized that people aren't forever. I know now that we all have to appreciate each other while we can. I think I've changed and I believe that Mrs. Baldwin has had a significant impact on my life. She gave me so much. She gave me a chance to laugh, to tell my stories, and to feel welcomed. She gave me the ability to be myself. Wherever I go, I know that Mrs. Baldwin will be watching over me, helping me to be happy.

### **Things to Notice About This Essay**

1. It is very hard to write about death. Poets and playwrights have been struggling—and often failing—for centuries. Think long and hard before you assign yourself the task of writing in a meaningful and fresh way about illness or death.

2. The essay has a clear focus: Mrs. Baldwin was important to the writer. A bit of specific evidence is offered: the friendly “Hey girl”. The reader wonders what other things Mrs. Baldwin did, what conversations they had, what actions created the feelings of warmth and closeness.
3. The writer uses a chronological organization and tells the story toward a conclusion (“I realized...”). The essay is organized, but the conclusion isn’t completely persuasive. Compare Samples 3 or 9, both of which tell more specific stories to support their conclusions. Remember to show rather than tell.
4. A final version of this essay should include revisions of “completely different,” “so much,” and “be myself”. The reader needs help to visualize what these phrases mean.
5. The writer may have used a spell-checking program, but errors like those in lines one and three show she didn’t proofread.

## **FINAL TIPS**

### **Four Key Points About the Application Essay**

1. All the questions, in one way or another, ask the same thing: “Tell us about yourself.”
2. So that means you’re an authority on the topic.
3. The format is not unfamiliar; it is a regular essay with “you” as the subject.
4. It is not a punishment—it is a chance to add life to your application and to pitch yourself outside the numbers.

### **Five Myths About Application Essays**

1. You have to write about something no one has ever written about before (unlikely and high risk).
2. There is a right answer to every question (there is only your right answer).
3. It is a good idea to be funny, clever or wacky (only if you think they are looking for funny, clever, or wacky applicants).
4. You have to do this alone (every writer asks for feedback, especially in high-stakes settings).
5. Your essay can get you in (only if other credentials also make you an interesting candidate).

### **Four Common Mistakes**

1. Visualizing the admissions committee as a bunch of stuffy old professors in tweed jackets and then trying to write something that will impress them.
2. Trying so hard to be memorable that you end up being eccentric.
3. Writing an essay so predictable and generic that with fewer than three noun revisions (change “my Dad” to “my boss”; change “summer at the beach” to “summer in the mountains”; change the “Mastersingers” to the “varsity basketball team”), this essay could work for most of the senior class.
4. Forgetting that your counselor and your teachers are your allies and that even your parents know something about this topic.

## **THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW**

Do you imagine the college entrance interview to be something like an interrogation of a suspected terrorist: lights shining in your face, people playing good cop/bad cop? For an unprepared student this might be true, but by knowing what to expect and how to respond, your interview can be a breeze. Here are some tips on how to make the most of the college interview.

### **The Basics**

A college interview is a chance to show that you are more than just test scores and grades. It's an exchange of information – you learn about the college and the college learns about you. It can last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour.

### **There's More Than One Type of Interview**

Interviews vary depending on the school, student, and particular situation. You could find yourself interviewing with an admission officer, a student, or an alumnus. Other, less formal, interview situations include group information sessions with admissions staff and current students, and high school and local college fairs. If you plan on attending a music, drama, or dance school, plan on performing an audition or submitting a portfolio.

### **Special-Interest Sessions**

If you plan to pursue specific interests in college, such as sports or clubs, you might find it helpful to talk to current students and faculty members.

**Sports:** If you're an athlete and want to play on a college team, arrange a meeting or a phone call with the coach. Bring your scrapbook, statistics, or other information that will help give a clear picture of your talents. Consider asking your high school coach to send a letter to the college on your behalf. Talk to students who are majoring in your desired field and make an appointment with a faculty member or adviser in the department. If you schedule a campus visit, be sure to sit in on a class.

**Activities:** If you plan to participate in an activity, such as the newspaper, band, or the radio station, speak to students who take part. It's a good way to find out what the people are like and what your chances are of getting involved.

### **Why You Should Interview**

Most colleges don't require an interview; however, there are many benefits to meeting face-to-face with an admission officer. For example, perhaps you: (1) feel your college application can't possibly convey your warm and shining personality, (2) are interested in the college, but want to learn more about its study abroad opportunities, science program, or whatever else interests you, or (3) want to explain why your grades slipped.

### **Interviews and the Admissions Process**

The interview is just one of many factors in the admissions decision. Admission directors usually say that the interview is rarely the deciding one. Still, if a borderline student turns out to be impressive, the interviewer has the authority to write a letter in support.

### **Nervous? Don't Be**

It's not the third degree, and there's no pass or fail. Unless you show up in a t-shirt and cut-offs and spew profanities, chances are the interview is not going to make or break you. As long as you've prepared and practiced, you'll probably make a good impression.

### **Be Your Own Best Advocate**

The staff learns about you from a slew of papers: your transcript, test scores, and application. While your essay and recommendations can offer an impression of who you are, words on paper can reveal only so much. The interview is your chance to be your own advocate by talking positively about your interests and enthusiasms, to show your personality, and to boost your chance of admission.



### **Discuss Special Circumstances**

The interview is a good time to explain a hitch in your transcript or discuss any personal circumstances that affected your studies. Problems that you may find difficult to write about in the application are often easier to discuss with a sympathetic admission counselor. For example, perhaps: you may not be the best math student, but it never stopped you from taking AP calculus – tell the interviewer why you persisted despite such difficulties. During sophomore year, your parents divorced, and your academic work took a downturn. You have a learning disability and need to make extra effort with every assignment.

### **It's Okay to Ask Questions**

Asking questions shows that you're interested in the college and what the admission officer has to say. You should always have a question in mind about the college or your major field to show that you have a deep interest in attending the school.

*The interview is your chance to be your own advocate*

You can also ask a general question, such as, "Do you have any advice for me?" Plus, asking questions can help you discover characteristics that colleges can't convey in a catalog. If an interviewer asks, "Why did you choose Florida University?" ask him back, "What do you think draws a student here?"

### **13 Things to Avoid...Don't**

- Be late
- Memorize speeches – sound natural and conversational
- Ask questions covered by the college catalog
- Chew gum
- Wear lots of cologne or perfume
- Swear or use too much slang
- Be arrogant – there's a fine line between being confident and boasting
- Lie – it will come back to haunt you
- Respond with only "yes" or "no" answers
- Tell the school it's your safety school
- Be rude to the receptionist or any other staff you meet
- Bring a parent into the interview
- Refuse an interview – this is usually noted

## **THOUGHTS ON INTERVIEWING**

### **Preparation for the College Interview**

A good preparation for an interview can give you a boost in confidence. This preparation actually begins when you are doing research about colleges. At that time, you are reviewing catalogs and literature and selecting those colleges which seem to offer what you want in many areas, field of study and curriculum, atmosphere, and environment.

As selections are made, remember what qualities from specific colleges are most appealing. As you prepare for the actual interview, be sure that you have pertinent questions, but do some homework in advance, so you avoid questions whose answers are clearly stated in the college catalogues and view books.

You should be prepared to discuss your accomplishments honestly, avoiding either a boastful or a falsely self-effacing manner. You can and should feel free to discuss your achievements, concentrating on those that have been most important and including the reasons for their importance. There is no need to include everything you have ever done, nor should you fear a discussion of those aspects of your high school career which may be less than commendable. A willingness to discuss these honestly without looking for excuses or someone to blame will show growth and maturity. In both the positive and negative aspects, honesty is the key.

### **College Interview Tips**

- Be prompt for your interview.
- Dress appropriately for your college interview.
- Be yourself – be prepared to discuss your accomplishments honestly.
- Discuss the achievements that are most important to you and include the reason for their importance.
- Be able to discuss honestly any facet of your record, such as grades, scores, recommendations, etc.
- Be able to discuss your interests and future plans.
- If you're not sure of your career or vocational choice, do not be afraid to say so.
- Write a note of thanks to the admissions officer with whom you had an interview as soon as you return home. (Be sure to write down his or her name in your notes!)

### **Some Sample Questions From Previous Years**

- How did your interest develop in our school? What is it about our school that intrigues you?
- Talk about your experiences at your high school. Is there a particular experience you had there that stands out?
- Give me three characteristics that describe you.
- Talk about someone you find intellectually challenging.
- Did you like the college? (i.e., What did you like about it when you visited?)
- If you were to stress one thing about yourself to a college, what would it be?
- If you could do anything to change the world, what would you change and why?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- Who is your favorite teacher and why?
- What do you want out of college?
- What has been the biggest challenge you have faced?
- If you could have lunch with anyone in the world, who would it be?
- If you could solve a major world problem, how would you go about doing it?
- What are you interested in studying?
- What would you change about your school if you had the power to do so?
- What would you do to make the world a better place?
- Why do you think you are a good match for my college?
- What would be the factor that would make you the most ideal candidate for the school?
- What is the most important thing you do in your spare time?
- What is your weakness?
- What are some of your unique qualities?
- If you had a time machine and could go back anytime and change history, to what time period would you go and what would you do?
- Name some challenges you've faced in your life.
- Name some interesting hobbies that you're involved with.
- How did you find out about our college?
- Why have you chosen your specified major? Where and what do you hope to do with it?
- What is your favorite book?
- Suppose you had to imagine yourself in a picture, who or what would you be with and why?
- How do you manage your time?
- Are you interested in the Greek system?
- What did you do last summer?
- Are you involved in community service?
- What is the one thing that has influenced your life? (i.e. person, place, book, etc.)

### **Sample Questions You Might Ask at the College Interview**

- Are there educational opportunities off campus, such as courses at neighboring colleges, study abroad, and internships for special majors such as business, psychology, etc.?
- What type of housing is available to freshmen?
- If there are fraternities or sororities on campus, are they important to the social life on campus?
- Do all students eat in the college cafeteria? Is there a meal plan?

- If you will require financial assistance for your education, what kind of financial aid program does the college have?
- What kinds of special services are available to students? Health? Psychological? Educational and Vocational placement?

You will want a tour of the campus and usually the college makes a provision for touring with campus guides. Try to ascertain the following information:

- Are facilities and grounds in good condition?
- Is the college in or near a city?
- Do the students remain on campus for the weekends?
- What interesting activities exist?
- Do classes tend to be large lectures or small sessions, or a combination of both? If possible, try to visit a class or two, especially one in your area of interest.

Visiting the student center and reading the college newspaper and bulletin board may answer many of your questions regarding the social life of the college.

Try to speak to students on campus. There may be graduates from your high school attending the college who could answer many of your questions.

- What do they like about the college?
- What do they dislike about the college?
- What type of campus security is there?
- Do they have an escort system? Is there a publicized crime rate? Ask to see one.

Remember, however, that you are an individual with your own needs, likes, and dislikes.

Attempt to find out, both from students and the admissions counselor, what the academic pressures are on campus. What percentage of graduates goes on to professional and graduate schools?

## **PRACTICE INTERVIEWS**

### **Warming Up for the Hot Seat**

Before you do the real thing, try a practice interview. Invite a family member or friend to practice with you, each of you taking turns as the interviewer and the interviewee. That way, you'll become accustomed to both asking and answering questions.

### **Don't Memorize Responses**

Do have some starting points for your answers and questions. Don't memorize a speech so you sound like a robot. Preserve your spontaneity and your ability to respond to the interviewer as a real, live person.

### **Know What to Expect**

Very often, the questions asked by interviewers are very similar from one college to the next. The admission staff just wants to make sure that you can speak intelligently about your grades, scores, and goals. They'll ask questions like:

- Why do you want to attend our college?
- What will you contribute?
- What courses have you enjoyed most?
- Are your grades an accurate reflection of your potential?
- Which of your activities is most rewarding and why?
- What has been your biggest achievement?
- What's your opinion on (fill in current event)?
- How did you spend last summer?

- What do you want to do after you graduate from college?
- What's the most difficult situation you've faced?
- If you could change one thing about your high school, what would it be?

### **Stay Cool When Questions Get Tough**

"Can you conduct this entire interview without using the word 'I'?" There isn't any way to prepare for a curve-ball question except to recognize that the possibility exists. If you get frazzled, say "I'll have to think that over. Is it okay if I write you about this?" Remember, it's much better to say, "I don't know" than to pretend to be an expert.

### **Your First Interview**

Consider scheduling your first interview at a college where your chances of admission are high, a "safety" school. This gives you a taste of the real thing without the pressure. Save the interviews at your "reach" colleges for when you've gained experience and confidence

## COLLEGE AND CAREER PLANNING WEBSITES

Please visit the **North Warren Regional School District website, Student Services, College and Career link** for valuable information. A list of college admissions counselors and their contact information is provided. The following websites are additional resources to locate information about colleges, universities, financial aid, and scholarships. If you need further assistance, please contact the College and Career Counselor.

### **NAVIANCE – through the North Warren web site**

1. [www.college-tip.com](http://www.college-tip.com)
2. [www.allcampus.com](http://www.allcampus.com)
3. [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
4. [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com)
5. [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)
6. [www.college411.com](http://www.college411.com)
7. [www.theadmissionsoffice.com](http://www.theadmissionsoffice.com)
8. [www.allaboutcollege.com](http://www.allaboutcollege.com)
9. [www.universities.com](http://www.universities.com)
10. [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
11. [www.bestschoolsusa.com](http://www.bestschoolsusa.com)
12. [www.aaced.com](http://www.aaced.com)
13. [www.edonline.com/cq/hbc](http://www.edonline.com/cq/hbc)
14. [www.usnews.com/usnews/edu](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu)
15. [www.petersons.com/ugrad/](http://www.petersons.com/ugrad/)
16. [www.myfuture.com](http://www.myfuture.com)
17. [www.rileyguide.com](http://www.rileyguide.com)
18. [www.wetfeet.com](http://www.wetfeet.com)
19. [www.eresumes.com](http://www.eresumes.com)
20. [www.prenhall.com/success/index.html](http://www.prenhall.com/success/index.html)
21. [www.njsca.org/col/col&car.htm](http://www.njsca.org/col/col&car.htm)
22. [www.NJNextStop.org](http://www.NJNextStop.org)
23. [www.collegebound.net](http://www.collegebound.net)
24. [www.njedge.org](http://www.njedge.org)
25. [www.braintrack.com](http://www.braintrack.com)
26. [www.aboutjobs.com](http://www.aboutjobs.com)
27. [www.junketstudies.com/rulesofw](http://www.junketstudies.com/rulesofw)
28. [www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com)
29. [www.embarc.com](http://www.embarc.com)
30. [www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)
31. [www.review.com](http://www.review.com)
32. [www.student.com](http://www.student.com)
33. [www.collegesource.com](http://www.collegesource.com)
34. [www.collegispossible.org](http://www.collegispossible.org)
35. [www.wiredscholar.com](http://www.wiredscholar.com)
36. [www.truecareer.com](http://www.truecareer.com)
37. [www.mapping-your-future.com](http://www.mapping-your-future.com)
38. [www.wowcareers.com](http://www.wowcareers.com)
39. [www.futurescan.com](http://www.futurescan.com)
40. [www.myfuture.com/careers.html](http://www.myfuture.com/careers.html)
41. [www.kidsway.com](http://www.kidsway.com)
42. <http://ncrc.rutgers.edu>
43. [www.ccm.edu](http://www.ccm.edu)
44. [www.wnjp.net](http://www.wnjp.net)
45. [www.college.gov](http://www.college.gov)

### SAT Coaching Websites

1. [www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)
2. [www.testu.com](http://www.testu.com)
3. [www.freesat1prep.com](http://www.freesat1prep.com)
4. [www.mysatreview.com](http://www.mysatreview.com)
5. [www.march2success.com](http://www.march2success.com)
6. [www.howstuffworks.com/sat.htm](http://www.howstuffworks.com/sat.htm)
7. [www.freevocabulary.com](http://www.freevocabulary.com)
8. [www.highscore.com](http://www.highscore.com)
9. [www.studyhall.com](http://www.studyhall.com)
10. NAVIANCE: PrepMe: SAT

### Financial Aid/Scholarship Websites

1. [www.saliemae.com/index.html](http://www.saliemae.com/index.html)
2. [www.theoldschool.org](http://www.theoldschool.org)
3. [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com)
4. [www.wiredscholar.com](http://www.wiredscholar.com)
5. [www.college-scholarships.com](http://www.college-scholarships.com)
6. [www.discovercard.com/tribute.htm](http://www.discovercard.com/tribute.htm)
7. [www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/agencies.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/agencies.html)
8. [www.gocollege.com/goscholarshipsearch/index.html](http://www.gocollege.com/goscholarshipsearch/index.html)
9. [www.hesaa.com](http://www.hesaa.com)
10. [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
11. [www.freescholarships.com](http://www.freescholarships.com)
12. [www.srnexpress.com](http://www.srnexpress.com)
13. [www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)
14. [www.studentrewards.com](http://www.studentrewards.com)
15. [www.free-4u.com](http://www.free-4u.com)
16. [www.ne-epc.com/aid.asp](http://www.ne-epc.com/aid.asp)

## NAVIANCE

### **What is NAVIANCE?**

NAVIANCE is a web-based college and career exploration and test-prep program. The link to NAVIANCE can be found on the NWR website, Student Services, Naviance links. Students receive login information and parents will also receive an account linked to their child's account.

Students will be able to take a personality type indicator survey as well as a career interest survey. The program provides career exploration and a college search program. The use of "scattergrams" allows students to view recent admission decisions for NWR graduates at various colleges and universities. This tool can assist students in estimating the likelihood of acceptance at prospective schools. An interactive test-prep program is also available and is a great cost-free tool for students to use in preparation of the PSAT, SAT, and ACT.

## COLLEGEBOARD.COM COLLEGE SEARCH

1. Log onto CollegeBoard.com
2. Click on For Students
3. Go to My Organizer and sign in or create a free account
4. Click on Find a College
5. Click on College Search Engine
6. Click on the Start key in the College Matchmaker box
  - a. There are several pages in this section
  - b. Click on all of the criteria that applies to you
  - c. On the bottom, right side of each page is a Next key
  - d. Click on the Next key to go to the next page
  - e. You can click on the See Results page on the bottom left
7. When you have completed the Matchmaker, click on See Results
8. You will get a list of colleges that match your criteria
9. Click on the School to get information

## ONLINE CAREER SEARCH

1. Log onto O-Net at [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org) (do not type in www)
2. Click on Skills Search
3. Check all boxes in the list of skills that apply to you
4. When you are done, click GO, on the bottom left of the screen
5. You will get a list of occupations that match the data that you inputted
6. Click on an occupation that interests you
7. You will get the following information for each occupation:
  - a. Related Job Titles
  - b. Tasks
  - c. Knowledge and Training necessary
  - d. Skills required
  - e. Abilities
  - f. Work activities
  - g. Work context
  - h. Interests, work styles, and work values
  - i. Related occupations
  - j. Wages and employment trends

For an in-depth job description, go to the United States Department of Labor website for the Occupational Outlook Handbook at [www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm)

1. Click on A-Z index
2. Type in a job title
3. You will get a job description that contains the following information:
  - a. Nature of the work
  - b. Working conditions
  - c. Training and other qualifications and advancement
  - d. Employment
  - e. Job outlook
  - f. Earnings
  - g. Related occupations
  - h. Sources of additional information

## FINANCIAL AID

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It is common knowledge that the cost of a college education has continued to rise in recent years. Paying for college is probably the second largest expenditure your family will make, and it should be approached with considerable knowledge and care.

For many families, financial aid is the key that can open the door to the education they desire and need. Don't rule out any school on the basis of cost alone. It is to your advantage to know where to seek assistance. Applying for admission is not enough. You must also apply for financial aid to be considered. You can give yourself a better chance by planning ahead.

Much of financial aid is awarded on the basis of need. To fairly assess the financial need of students, post-secondary institutions must consider two factors: (1) how much the family can afford to pay toward the cost of education beyond high school, and (2) the expenses associated with attending a post-secondary institution.

Students have certain primary responsibilities to fulfill. The following planning guidelines are recommended for all students seeking financial aid:

- Decide which type of post-secondary education you wish to pursue and which institution is right for you.
- Familiarize yourself with Federal, State, and private financial aid programs.
- Start your own financial aid file (collect student aid brochures, college applications, and other pertinent materials).
- Set up a calendar—dates, times, and locations of required exams, as well as when applications and financial statements are due.
- Be sure to take or retake the SAT and/or ACT examinations. You may need these scores to be eligible for some scholarships.
- Contact college financial aid offices for information about loans, work-study programs, and jobs available. Student aid pamphlets are also generally available.
- Utilize resources in the Counseling Department, i.e. reference guides on student aid.

A good deal of information is available about the kinds of financial aid provided by Federal and State governments, private agencies, and institutions of post-secondary education. Many of these sources will be reviewed in this booklet.

At best, this booklet can serve as an introduction to the subject of financial aid. Your success in finding financial assistance depends on your own initiative and determination to follow-up possible sources and to seek out further information and advice. Good planning and hard work may make the difference in helping you find the way to the college of your choice.

### I. FEDERAL PROGRAMS

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#### A. Federal PELL Grant

Provides direct grants to undergraduate students. Provides for grants that range from \$400 to as high as \$4,000. To apply, student and parent must complete the FAFSA application. The amount of the grant is based on a need analysis determined by the FAFSA.



**B. Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)**

Designed to assist students who have exceptionally high financial needs. Individual colleges determine who is eligible and how much each grant will be. Awards range from \$100 to \$4,000 and are offered only after all other sources of aid are exhausted. To qualify, a student must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment and carry at least one half of a full course load. Since FSEOG is awarded by the school, normal financial aid application procedures apply.

**C. Perkins Loan (formerly National Direct Student Loan)**

Provides long-term federal low-interest loan from the school and with allocations up to \$4,000 per year. The college determines who is eligible and the amount of the loan.

**D. College Work-Study Program**

Employment, on or off campus, arranged by the institution with public or private non-private agencies. The college determines who is eligible, how much the student may earn, and where the student will work. To qualify, a student must be accepted for enrollment and have established financial need.

**E. Federal Direct Stafford Student Loan**

Provides students from middle and upper income families with long-term, low-interest loans for education expenses. Funds are provided by participating private lending institutions such as banks, credit unions, and savings and loan associations. These loans are made to the student, not the parents, and the student is responsible for repayment. Students can borrow up to \$3,500 for the first year, \$4,500 for the second year, and \$5,500 for the third and fourth years. There are two types of Direct student Loans. Students who demonstrate financial need are eligible for a subsidized loan which begins repayment six months after graduation and incurs no interest charge during the period in which the student is enrolled. Students who do not demonstrate financial need may be eligible for the unsubsidized Direct Loan. Interest on an unsubsidized loan does accrue during enrollment but may either be paid during your school enrollment or capitalized. Repayment of principal and interest begins six months after a student ceases to be enrolled at least halftime or leaves school. Under some limited special circumstances, repayment of a Stafford Loan may not be required.

**F. Federal PLUS Loan**

Parents of dependent students can borrow up to the cost of attendance minus any other financial aid received. Repayment begins 60 days after disbursement of the monies. The interest rate is variable up to 9 %.

**G. Veterans Educational Benefits**

The purpose of Veterans Educational Benefits is to provide grant, loan, and work assistance to eligible veterans of the armed services. After serving at least six months of active duty, veterans may receive one and one-half months of educational benefits for every month served in the armed forces. Veterans are eligible for educational benefits for as long as ten years after they are discharged.

**H. Hope Scholarship Tax Credit**

The Hope Scholarship Tax Credit allows students in their first two years of college to receive a 100 percent tax credit for the first \$1,000 of tuition and required fees and a 50 percent credit for the second \$1,000. The credit is phased out for joint filers who earn between \$80,000 and \$100,000 and for single tax filers who earn between \$40,000 and \$50,000. Students in their first two years of college or vocational school who are enrolled at least half time are eligible for the credit.

**II. NEW JERSEY STATE PROGRAMS**

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New Jersey offers several types of financial assistance to students in the form of grants and loans. The Department of Higher Education administers a variety of grant and loan programs. Eligibility requirements and benefits for the major programs are summarized in the following sections.

### **A. Tuition Aid Grants**

Tuition Aid Grants (TAG) applicants must be, or intend to be, enrolled as full-time undergraduates (minimum of 12 credit hours per semester) in an approved college. They must demonstrate financial need and be residents of New Jersey for at least 12 consecutive months prior to receiving a grant.

### **B. FFELP Loan Program**

Under the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), parents and students can obtain low cost education loans to help pay for the cost of higher education. The FFELP program is a private public partnership. FFELP loans are made to students and parents by lenders. To protect the lender from loss in the event of the borrower's death, disability, bankruptcy, or default, the loan is guaranteed by a guarantor.

The New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) is a guarantee agency that works with lenders, schools, students, and parents in processing student loan applications, providing information about the availability of loans, counseling borrowers about their loan obligations, preventing student loan defaults, and collecting on defaulted student loans. It is important for students and parents to remember that FFELP loans are a debt and must be paid back with interest. The Federal Consolidation Loan, PLUS Loan, and Federal Stafford Loan are all part of this program.

### **C. NJ CLASS Loan**

NJ CLASS (New Jersey College Loans to Assist State Students) is designed to bridge the gap between family resources and financial aid awarded. The student must be a citizen or eligible non-citizen of the United States prior to filing a NJ CLASS application. Family income must meet or exceed the Federal poverty guidelines for a family of four, as adjusted annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The current minimum income requirement based on 2006 guidelines is \$20,000. The student must meet credit criteria (or have an eligible co-signer, usually the parent), and cannot owe a grant refund nor be in default on any educational loans. In addition to the requirements above, the student must be a permanent resident of New Jersey attending any eligible college/university worldwide OR a non-New Jersey resident attending an eligible New Jersey college/university, be enrolled at least as a half-time student at an approved school, and be making satisfactory academic progress towards completion of their program of study.

There is a 2% administrative fee that is taken off the top of the loan and repayment can take as much as 20 years without penalty. Interest rates currently range from 5.9% to 6.7% depending on the repayment option chosen.

### **D. Scholarships**

A variety of scholarships are sponsored by the New Jersey Higher Education Assistance Authority. Some of the most popular are the Edward J. Bloustein Distinguished Scholars, Urban Scholars, and the NJ STARS program. More information on the variety of state scholarships is available at [www.hesaa.org](http://www.hesaa.org).

## **III. THE FINANCIAL AID FORM AND CSS PROFILE**

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The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the need analysis form that the students and parents complete to demonstrate eligibility for institutional, State, and Federal aid, including the PELL Grant Program. The FAFSA can be used by dependent, as well as the partially or completely self-supporting students on the undergraduate, graduate, and professional school levels. The FAFSA collects information about the income, assets, and expenses of the student, student's spouse (if applicable), and student's parents. You must file the FAFSA in order to be considered for financial aid. It is required by all colleges and universities. Students may also need to complete and file the CSS/Financial Aid Profile if the college requires it in addition to the FAFSA.

The Federal Government and the College Scholarship Service analyze the information you report on the FAFSA and the CSS Profile to determine how much your family can reasonably be expected to contribute to meet college costs. This analysis is sent to the financial aid office at the college, state agencies, or other programs you designate, and the estimate of family contribution is subtracted from a particular college's

costs to determine how much financial aid you will need. The information you provide on the FAFSA and the CSS Profile is confidential and is only released to those colleges and programs you designate to receive it.

#### IV. HOW FINANCIAL AID FORMS ARE PROCESSED

FORMS	FEES	PROCESSING AGENCY	ACKNOWLEDGMENT SENT TO	FINANCIAL AID REPORT SENT	COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID LETTERS SENT TO
FAFSA	None	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	<b>Student</b> Report includes a summary of your financial data <b>check for accuracy</b>	Schools identified by student  NJ State Financial Aid Program (if requested on FAFSA)	<b>Student</b> You must respond to the college by stated deadline to officially receive your financial aid award
CSS Profile	<b>\$5.00</b> plus <b>\$18.00</b> for each college requiring a Profile Report	COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP SERVICE	Student is notified that their profile is being processed. When processing is complete, a summary report of data collected is sent to student <b>check for accuracy</b>	Schools identified by student	
INSTITUTIONAL FORMS (if the school has its own application form)	None	FINANCIAL AID OFFICE at the college or university to which you are eligible	Some colleges acknowledge receipt of institutional form		

#### V. AWARD LETTERS

The school notifies the student via an award letter which describes the source type and amount of aid the student will receive.

The award letter should be considered a commitment between the school and the student. The notice of what type of aid the student is being offered generally provides specific, easily understood information about:

1. The cost of attendance
2. How need was determined, including the expected parental and student contributions
3. The student's actual amount of need
4. How the need will be met – the aid package

5. How the aid will be disbursed – by semester, quarter, etc., depending on the school’s academic calendar
6. Wage rate and number of hours per week, if work is part of the aid package
7. Any conditions surrounding the offer

The notice of aid itself or one of the accompanying documents generally serves as the form which the student must sign to either accept or reject the offer of assistance.

## **VI. REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS**

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Below is a selection of the many regional and national scholarship competitions that students can enter. Some of these applications are available in the College and Career Office. Students can also apply online for most of them. It is a good idea for all students to complete a comprehensive web search for appropriate scholarship opportunities.

**AXA Achievement Scholarship Program** in association with U.S. News & World Report, awards scholarships to students who are well-rounded, determined to succeed, and have demonstrated achievement at a job, sport, or extracurricular activity. One **\$10,000** scholarship will be awarded to a student in New Jersey and ten additional **\$15,000** national scholarships will be awarded. [www.axa-achievement.com](http://www.axa-achievement.com)

**Burger King Scholars Program** offers **\$1,000** scholarships to students who work a minimum of 15 hours per week. In addition, students must have a minimum GPA of 2.5, demonstrate financial need, and participate in extra-curricular activities.

**Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation** offers 250 academic merit-based scholarships to qualified seniors who exhibit leadership, commitment to community and/or employment. Fifty students will receive **\$20,000** scholarships (\$5,000 per year over four years) and 200 will receive **\$4,000** scholarships (\$1,000 per year over four years). Students must apply online. [www.coca-colascholars.org](http://www.coca-colascholars.org)

**Commerce Bank** offers 200 **American Dream** scholarships in the amount of **\$1,000** to seniors who have demonstrated academic achievement and leadership, along with a commitment to community service. Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Financial need is not a factor. Applications can be obtained at a local Commerce Bank branch. [www.commerceonline.com/AmericanDream](http://www.commerceonline.com/AmericanDream)

**Community Builders Association of New Jersey** offers a scholarship to seniors planning to pursue studies in the construction industry or related field such as engineering or architecture.

**Marine Corps** awards **\$500-\$10,000** to the son or daughter of a Marine on active duty, in the reserves, retired, or deceased.

**Marine Trades Association** awards a **\$1,500** scholarship to a senior planning on furthering their career in the recreational marine industry in New Jersey. A full scholarship is offered to Pennco Tech for the Marine Technician Program.

**National Association of Water Companies** awards a **\$2,500** scholarship to a senior planning to attend a New Jersey college to major in the water utility industry or related field. A minimum 3.0 GPA is required.

**New Jersey Association of College Admission Counseling** offers a **\$1,000** scholarship to students who demonstrate a commitment to learning and have demonstrated leadership skills and/or community service.

**New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC-Partnership in Education)** awards a scholarship to a senior who has excelled in academics and plans on attending a County College.

**New Jersey Association of School Psychologists** offers an award to a high school minority graduating senior who has demonstrated academic promise and will be pursuing post-secondary education.

**New Jersey Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Association** awards a **\$1,000** scholarship to a senior with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome who will be pursuing post-secondary education.

**New Jersey Coalition on Donation Scholarship** awards **\$2,000** to a graduating senior who is a donor transplant recipient, donor family member, or a donor awareness advocate. In addition, the student must be in the top half of the graduating class and plan to pursue post-secondary education.

**NJPSA Student Leadership Scholarship** is a **\$2,500** award offered to a senior who has demonstrated leadership in co-curricular activities other than athletics.

**New Jersey School Counselors Association** offers a **\$1,000** scholarship to each of three students. Selection is based on a 300-500 word essay describing how a school counselor has influenced his/her life in a positive way. (Examples: helping you make an important decision; providing support in a critical time; assisting in developing self-understanding and self-acceptance, etc.) In addition, a copy of the student's transcript and a letter of acceptance to a college is considered.

**New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants** offers scholarships ranging from **\$6,500** to **\$8,500**. Applicants must plan to pursue a career in accounting. Selection is based on academics, SAT scores, an essay, and a personal interview. [www.njcpa.org/scholarships](http://www.njcpa.org/scholarships)

**New Jersey Utilities Association** awards a **\$1,500** scholarship to a graduating minority, female, or disabled student planning on pursuing post-secondary education.

**New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation** awards two **\$2,500** scholarships to eligible students. Applicants must have visited the New Jersey Veterans Memorial in Holmdel and completed an application which includes a short essay (250-300 words) reflecting on that visit.

**Tourettes Syndrome Association of New Jersey** offers a scholarship to a graduating senior diagnosed with TourettesSyndrom and planning to pursue post-secondary education.

**Toyota Community Scholars Program** offers 100 **\$10,000 - \$20,000** scholarships. Selection is based on academics, leadership, and student's contribution in the area of community service.

**Youth Supporting Our Troops** is a National Citation and personal letter from the President of the United States to students who support the troops serving overseas or who have helped their families in the U.S.

## **VII. MILITARY SCHOLARSHIPS AND PROGRAMS**

### **A. United States Military Academies**

There are four United States Military Academies: The U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London. Each offers an outstanding education and full four-year scholarships.

The Academies look for high-achieving men and women with leadership potential. Admissions criteria include:

- High school academic performance
- Standardized test scores (SAT or ACT)
- Athletics and extracurricular activities
- Leadership positions, community involvement
- Work experiences

Academy graduates receive a Bachelor of Science degree and a leadership position as a junior officer in the Military—Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. There is a minimum service obligation of five years, but most academy graduates make the Military their career.

### **Official Academy Web Sites**

For all but the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, a congressional recommendation is required. Admissions is a complex process; and interested students are encouraged to begin in the Fall of their Junior year. Explore the web sites of each of the Service Academies to get a better idea of the curriculums offered, institutional traditions, and the most up-to-date admissions information.

**Army:** [www.usma.edu/](http://www.usma.edu/)

**Navy and Marine Corps:** [www.usna.edu//homepage.php](http://www.usna.edu//homepage.php)

**Air Force:** [www.usafa.af.mil/](http://www.usafa.af.mil/)

**Coast Guard:** [www.uscga.edu/](http://www.uscga.edu/)

### **B. Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)**

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Naval ROTC Programs offered by the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and the Air Force, train qualified young men and women to become officers in those services upon graduation from college. ROTC is available in more than 1,000 colleges and universities throughout the U.S., both those that host ROTC units or detachments, and those with cross-enrollment agreements with them.

ROTC scholarships are not necessary for participation in ROTC, but hundreds of ROTC students receive scholarships every year. Scholarships are competitively awarded on merit. The main considerations are:

- High school academic record
- SAT or ACT scores
- Extracurricular activities
- Personal interview

The length, value, and terms of ROTC scholarships vary by service. All services offer four-year scholarships that include full tuition, books, fees, and a monthly tax-free stipend.

#### **ROTC Online**

Explore the following web sites for additional information and for specific colleges and universities where ROTC programs are available:

**U.S. Army:** [www.goarmy.com/rotc/](http://www.goarmy.com/rotc/)

**U.S. Navy/Marine Corps:** [www.nrotc.navy.mil/](http://www.nrotc.navy.mil/)

**U.S. Air Force:** [www.afrotc.com/](http://www.afrotc.com/)

### **C. Armed Forces Benefits**

#### **Chapter 1606/Chapter 1607 (REAP)**

Students who are Reservists or National Guard members, or served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001, for at least 90 consecutive days, are eligible. Full-time students receive a monthly stipend for personal use. The monthly stipend will be reduced proportionately if you enroll part time. Visit [http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI\\_Bill\\_Info/rates.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/rates.htm) for complete information on current rates.

#### **Montgomery GI Bill Program**

The Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty provides up to 36 months of benefits for eligible veterans who were honorably discharged, have completed high school, and meet certain other conditions. Learn more at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)

## **VIII. ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP**

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Many students with outstanding academic potential often make their college choices on the basis of cost alone. Increasingly, small and large universities offer merit scholarships which are not contingent upon financial need.

These scholarships may be labeled as Presidential Scholarships, Alumni Residential Scholarships, Faculty Merit Awards, Merit Scholarship Programs, etc. Regardless of titles, these scholarship programs have one thing in common – cash awards for academically talented students. Some are based solely on a competitive exam; others consider academic merit, leadership, intellectual, and personal promise, SAT scores, and class rank. Academically talented students should consult with their school counselor.

## **IX. 529 PLANS and BUDGET PLANS**

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### **A. 529 Plans**

The NJBEST 529 pre-paid college tuition plan is a state-sponsored program that allows parents, relatives, and friends to invest for a child's college education. The account belongs to you, but is managed by TIAA-CREF. As a parent, you can open 529 College Savings Plans for as many children as you want with a minimum investment of only \$25 per child. You can continue contributing up to a maximum plan value of \$305,000 for each child. You control the plan and may change the beneficiary to any family member at any time. This means if one child decides against college, the plan can be earmarked for another child in the beneficiary's family. There are many investment companies that offer 529 Plans, including Franklin Templeton Investments, T. Rowe Price, and Charles Schwab, to name a few. These plans should be examined in considerable depth.

### **B. Budget Plans**

There are several companies that offer parents assistance via budgeting advice and payment plans. These plans are designed to relieve the pressure of “lump sum” payments by spreading the cost over a period of months. Academic Management Services of Swansea, MA ([www.amsweb.com](http://www.amsweb.com)) is one example of an independent provider. Check with your college or university for budget plan programs they use and recommend.

## **X. COOPERATIVE EDUCATION/INTERNSHIPS**

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Cooperative education is a blend of classroom instruction and on-the-job work experience related to the formal instruction. The classroom instruction is conducted in the colleges and universities. The on-the-job experience is sponsored by employers. The money earned during the work phase of the program helps pay for college costs. The work experience will often lead to employment with the sponsoring employer.

## **XI. FINANCIAL AID PUBLICATIONS**

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Many books are available to assist you in understanding the financial aid process and with searches for scholarships. A sample selection of books you may wish to review include:

- *The College Cost and Financial Aid Handbook*, published by The College Board. Provides step-by-step advice on applying for financial aid and making the most of your own resources.
- *Kaplan's Guide to Scholarships*. Includes information on thousands of scholarship opportunities and detailed descriptions of scholarships. Offers advice on writing winning scholarship applications.
- *Peterson's Sports Scholarships*. A comprehensive guide to athletic scholarship and freshman financial aid at over 1,700 four- and two- year colleges.
- *How to Find a Scholarship Online*, published by McGraw-Hill. Features over 3,500 website addresses for federal, state, and private scholarships with award sponsors, deadlines, and requirements.

- *The Scholarship Book*, by Daniel J. Cassidy, President, National Scholarship Research Service. A comprehensive guide to private-section scholarships, grants, and loans for undergraduates.

## **XII. SUGGESTED FINANCIAL AID CHECKLIST**

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- Have you checked to determine whether you are eligible for scholarships or loans from local individuals, groups, and organizations?
- Have you entered any contests, especially those approved by the National Association of Secondary School Principals?
- Does either parent belong to a labor union, a professional or trade association? To a fraternal organization?
- Are one of your parents permanently disabled?
- Have you decided on a field of major student? Foreign language? Science? Engineering? Specialized scholarships are available for certain college majors.
- Have you won any special honors or awards? Do you have a hobby or maintain a special or unusual interest?
- Are you planning AROTC, NROTC, AFROTC in college? Interested in military service as a career?
- Are you a member of any particular religious denomination? Member of a minority, ethnic or racial group?
- Are you physically or emotionally disabled?
- Are you interested in earning all or part of your college expenses by attending school and working for a company which offers a cooperative work-study program?
- Have you had part-time work experience? In a retail food store? Caddie? Other employment?
- Would you like to obtain college credits through examination?

## **XIII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

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**Acknowledgment** – A form sent by processing agent telling student their financial statement has been processed.

**Assets** – You or your family’s financial worth including equity in real estate, stocks, bonds, and cash savings. Equity in your primary residence is no longer considered.

**Award Letter** – The document issued to the student aid applicant that indicates the type and amount of the funds awarded from the various aid programs and the conditions which govern the award.

**College Costs** – Student Budget – All the costs for attending a particular school or college. These costs include tuition, fees, books, room and board, and living expenses.

**Commercial Lender** – A bank and/or savings institution or similar organization that makes loans to people for consumer purchases such as college.



**Educational Testing Service** – A non-profit organization that administers the Scholastic Aptitude Test and CSS operations for the College Board.

**Eligibility Index** – The numeric value reported on the Student Eligibility Report (SER) that indicates the level of contribution expected from the student/family according to the financial data provided.

**Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)** – The estimated amount of money the family can contribute towards the cost of college. This figure is based on a family's income, assets, household size, number of family members in college, etc.

**Federal/PELL Grant** – A federal grant that is available to any undergraduate student with financial need.

**Federal/Perkins Loan** – An education loan made by a school or college from federal need-based funds.

**Federal/Stafford Student Loan** – Subsidized or unsubsidized loans backed by the federal government and administered through the State of New Jersey with repayment to begin six months after graduation or leaving school.

**Financial Aid Office** – College office that is responsible for evaluating student eligibility for aid and awarding the available aid funds.

**Financial Aid Package** – The financial aid awarded to a student from a combination of two or more aid programs.

**Financial Need** – The difference between what you and your parents can contribute to the cost of your education and the cost of going to college.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** – Form used to apply for financial aid from federal, state, and institutional financial aid programs.

**Grant** – Aid that you do not have to repay.

**Income** – All taxable money reported on your IRS 1040 Forms, plus all money earned from salary, wages and tips, social security, unemployment, child support, pensions, and welfare.

**Independent Student** – A student who was born before January 1, 1979, is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, is a ward of the court, or has a dependent child.

**Interest** – The cost of borrowing money.

**IRS** – The Internal Revenue Service, the federal tax collector.

**Itemized Deductions** – The family's deductible expenses listed in detail on the federal and/or state income tax return.

**Loan** – Money which is borrowed and must be repaid to the lender with interest.

**Parent** – A natural, step, or adoptive parent alone or in conjunction claiming financial responsibility for the applicant during the time span indicated on the application, (Foster parents, guardians, wards of the State, orphans, other relatives, do not qualify as parents for these purposes.)

**Federal Loan Program (PLUS)** – Loans taken by parents of dependent students for college.

**Principal** – Amount of money borrowed.

**Resident** – Independent students and the parents of dependent students must maintain their residency in New Jersey for a period of 12 months to date of application.

**Scholarship** – A grant awarded on the basis of talent or academic achievement rather than solely on financial need.

**Student Eligibility Report (SER)** – A report to the student from the State of New Jersey which gives estimated family contribution. Also includes a Tax Release Form.

**Work Study** – Part-time jobs for students either on or off campus with non-profit agencies to allow them to earn money for college expenses.

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS TO KNOW**

College Scholarship Service Education Testing Service.....(609) 951-1025  
N.J. Financial Aid and College Hotline.....(800) 792-8670  
Aid Information.....(800) 4-FED-AID  
N.J. Vocational Rehabilitation.....Camden.....(856) 757-2781  
New Brunswick.....(732) 545-8120  
Newark.....(973) 648-3367  
Trenton.....(609) 292-2940  
Social Security Benefits, call your local office, or.....(800) 272-1111  
Toll number for General Inquiries.....(301) 948-4070

**HELPFUL WEBSITES**

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)  
[www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)  
[www.hessa.org](http://www.hessa.org)[www.collegeboard.com/profile](http://www.collegeboard.com/profile)  
[www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov](http://www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov)

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