

# HOW TO HAVE... AN **OSSYM** COLLEGE SEARCH EXPERIENCE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE OSSYM COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS WITH RESOURCES AND WORKSHEETS



**Choosing a college** is time consuming and at times may be frustrating, but it can also be an opportunity for greater self-knowledge and increased family communication. It can also be a time of tremendous growth as you gain even more independence and self- determination. While the ultimate decisions about which schools to which you will apply or attend will always rest with you and your family, I want to make sure you have all the information necessary to make an informed decision. As your college counselor, I am here to act as a support and resource throughout the process.

I look forward to working closely with you!

## CYNTHIA PARISH

DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING

OKLAHOMA SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

[Cynthia.parish@ossm.edu](mailto:Cynthia.parish@ossm.edu) 405.522.7830

## Table of Contents

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TIMELINE .....	3
Junior Year: Spring .....	3
Junior/Senior Year: .....	4
Senior Year: .....	4
THE COLLEGE SEARCH .....	6
SEARCHING FOR THE “BEST FIT” COLLEGE .....	7
Choose your College Priorities.....	8
Meeting with your Counselor.....	9
THREE MAJOR MISTAKES STUDENTS MAKE IN THE COLLEGE PLANNING PROCESS* .....	11
THE ESSENTIAL DATA CHECKLIST* .....	12
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE VISITS?.....	14
WHAT COLLEGES SHOULD I VISIT? .....	14
WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK ON A COLLEGE VISIT?.....	16
WHAT SHOULD BE ON MY COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST? .....	17

APPLYING TO COLLEGE.....	18
APPLICATION STRATEGIES .....	18
The Common Application .....	18
What you'll need for every application: .....	19
WHAT IF I AM INTERESTED IN APPLYING TO U.S. MILITARY ACADEMIES?.....	19
Timeline for Military Applications .....	20
LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION .....	20
ASKING FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION .....	21
TRANSCRIPTS .....	23
Procedure for requesting a transcript: .....	23
THE COLLEGE RÉSUMÉ.....	24
WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE ON THE RÉSUMÉ? .....	24
Ten “Do’s” on the College Application Résumé.....	24
Ten "Don't Do's" on the College Application Résumé.....	24
THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW.....	25
WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW?.....	25
BEING COMPETITIVE: THE STANDOUT FACTOR.....	26
Activity: What will be <i>your</i> standout factor? .....	27
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Appendix A: Useful Websites .....	27
Appendix B: Questions to ask a College Representative.....	28
Appendix C: Some common terms in college admissions.....	31
Early Decision/Early Action/Restrictive Early Action.....	32
Appendix D: Scholarship Search.....	34

\*Some of the material excerpted from Peter Van Buskirk’s *College Planning Workbook*

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TIMELINE

One of my goals is to help you navigate the steps of the admission process and help you establish and keep an admission schedule.

Here's what you should be doing now:

## Junior Year: Spring

- ✓ Keep your grades up! College admissions counselors look closely at your junior year grades. In fact, this semester's grades will be the last ones on the transcript when you apply to colleges next fall.
- ✓ Prep for ACT/SAT/AP Exams
- ✓ Talk with your family about your college goals
- ✓ Identify the factors in a college that are most important to you—location, cost, programs, public, private, religious affiliation, social environment, etc.
- ✓ Start building your college list.
- ✓ Get to know your teachers. If you know your teachers, they will be better equipped to write your recommendations.
- ✓ Start visiting colleges; sometimes it may be impossible, but it's best to visit when regular classes are in session.
- ✓ Attend a college fair in your area.
- ✓ If interested in one of the service academies (West Point, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard Academy), you should begin the process now; also consider applying for their summer seminars.
- ✓ Start looking for summer programs offered through colleges and other institutions
- ✓ Make yourself competitive in college admissions by enrolling in a challenging senior course schedule.
- ✓ Get to know your Loveable OSSM College Counselor! If you have any questions or just want to chat, you can find me in my office or email me any time.
  - ***BEGINNING IN JANUARY, I WILL ASK YOU TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME TO SIT DOWN AND DISCUSS YOUR COLLEGE PLANS AND LET ME HELP YOU FIND A COLLEGE THAT WILL FIT YOUR NEEDS AND MAKE YOU HAPPY.***

## Junior/Senior Year:

### June/July

- ✓ Participate in meaningful summer activities
- ✓ Create an account at [apply.commonapp.org](https://apply.commonapp.org). Your information will roll over in the fall when the application goes live.
- ✓ Begin working on your essays/make revisions.
- ✓ Create a college resume (see “Resume” section in this packet for advice and examples).
- ✓ Narrow your college list to a good balance of safety, target, and reach schools.
- ✓ Complete your college application survey and other tasks on Naviance by August 15<sup>th</sup>.

## Senior Year:

### August/September

- ✓ Open online applications (Common App goes live August 1<sup>st</sup>). Check deadlines and application costs and preview the essay questions and general format.
- ✓ Match your Common App account to Naviance (Directions will be on Naviance Student)
- ✓ Meet with college representatives who visit OSSM. Ask good questions; make a good impression (See Appendix: “Questions to Ask a College Representative”)
- ✓ Schedule college visits.
- ✓ Finalize your resume, if needed, with your college counselor.
- ✓ Narrow your college application list to those in which you are sincerely interested.
- ✓ Determine whether to apply early action / decision to any school.
- ✓ Make a master calendar and note deadlines for applications, scholarships, financial aid.
- ✓ If you need to retake standardized tests, the October test date is the last one that will be considered for Early Action/Early Decision admissions. If applicable, request an application fee waiver. You can get this from Ms. Bonnet. Also, most colleges participate in test fee waivers programs (SAT / ACT) that allow students who receive test fee waivers to also receive application fee waivers for up to four colleges/universities.
- ✓ If required, notify testing services, SAT and ACT, to **send official reports to the colleges** to which you are applying.

### Early October

- ✓ Request **recommendation letters** from your counselor, teachers, or others who know you well. As a courtesy, make your requests three weeks or more before the letters are due. (See “Naviance instructions for Recommendation Requests”).
- ✓ Recommendation writers appreciate a packet of materials to make their task easier, including:
  - ✓ Details, guidelines, deadlines, and any required forms.
  - ✓ Your “brag sheet” (completed in Naviance Student)
  - ✓ Your resume (either in Naviance Student or other format)Remind/confirm with your counselors and teachers that all requested materials are sent. It is your responsibility to make sure the letters are sent on time. Teachers are often busy and appreciate gentle reminders. As soon as they submit your letters, write a thank-you note to each recommender.
- ✓ Continue revising your essays. Seek feedback and assistance.

- ✓ Request that your high school sends your **initial transcript** to the colleges. Follow proper procedure for transcript requests through Naviance Student.
- ✓ Apply for financial aid by submitting the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#), which is free of charge (opens October 1).
- ✓ Keep your grades up!

#### November

- ✓ Early Action / Decision application deadlines are typically on November 1st or in early November.
- ✓ For December/January Regular Decision deadlines, continue working on applications and supplements.
- ✓ Keep studying hard. Colleges will see your semester transcripts!

#### December

- ✓ Most Early Decision/Early Action notifications will be sent around mid-December. Communicate with your college counselor when you find out!
- ✓ If accepted, be sure to finish your senior year academically strong; colleges may rescind their decision based on your academic reports. You may want to submit your applications by December so that you don't need to worry about them over winter break. However, if your essays could use additional editing, you should spend time polishing them. Just be sure to submit it by the deadline.
- ✓ Depending on the admissions deadlines of the colleges to which you are applying, December may be the latest date you can re-take any standardized tests (SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT) and still have your scores considered by colleges. Be sure to check whether colleges will accept scores from this test date. You might have to rush the sending of your scores to admissions offices.
- ✓ Complete the **CSS Profile**. Most schools will require this form in addition to the FAFSA (The College Board charges a small fee to fill out this form). This is the form they'll use to determine your eligibility for institutional aid. The FAFSA is for Federal aid.

#### January

- ✓ Focus on completing your scholarship applications and submit them in a timely manner.
- ✓ Request Mid-Year reports from your counselor.

#### April

- ✓ Schools will notify you of their admissions decisions by mid-April.
- ✓ They will also send financial aid offers around the same time. Compare financial aid packages before deciding on a school.
- ✓ Notify your college counselor of any college acceptances, deferrals, or denials and scholarship offers
- ✓ If you have not already visited the college you hope to attend, it is a good idea to visit before accepting. Most colleges will have an admit weekend for their prospective freshmen.

### Early May

- ✓ Notify the colleges to which you were accepted of your decision. May 1<sup>st</sup> is typically the National Decision date.
  - You may submit an enrollment deposit to one school only! Only one final transcript will be submitted by the College Counseling Department to the college you decide to attend.
  - Reply also to those colleges where you have been accepted, but do not plan to attend.

### June

- ✓ Ask your high school to send a final transcript to the college you will attend (Request “Final Transcript” through Naviance Student).
- ✓ Get to know the college you have chosen by exploring the web site and looking through course catalogs. Learn about options for housing and meal plans.
- ✓ Fill out any forms your college sends to you. These might include requests for board and meal plan preferences, a roommate matching questionnaire, additional financial aid forms, course- or major-specific forms, and many others.

## THE COLLEGE SEARCH

*My overarching goal involves working proactively with each OSSM student to find the right college fit.*

What does “right fit” mean?

“Fit” is the extent to which a college matches a student’s needs and wishes. Sometimes “fit” can be quantifiable: size, location, the existence of a particular program, TA’s teaching classes; other times “fit” is more subjective, depending on the chemistry between student and school, a feature of “fit” that is every bit as important as the quantifiable elements.\*

**\*A good college “fit” is one that...**

1. Offers a program of study and activities to match your interests and needs.
2. Provides a style of instruction to match the way you learn most effectively.
3. Provides a level of academic rigor to match your aptitude and preparation
4. Offers a community that feels like home to you.
5. Values you for what you have to offer!

---

*IN ANY EVENT, "FIT" WILL BE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT IN THE LONG RUN THAN ANY PARTICULAR "NAME BRAND" OR PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF A SCHOOL.*

---

## SEARCHING FOR THE "BEST FIT" COLLEGE

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE SEARCH

Prioritize your college search – make it important! Roll up your sleeves and take ownership of this process. The more you invest in your search now, the better will be the fit with your college. The longer you wait to get started, the more options will pass you by. This should be an adventure...not a chore.

- Avoid the trap of familiarity and explore the wonderful palette of schools out there. Be open to suggestions and willing to investigate. Do not settle for the same schools to which everybody else is applying.
- Avoid the college admission rat race. Be leery of rankings and the year's "hot school" list. Do not confuse admit rates with quality. On-line chats and blogs can be useful when used properly. But they can also be a source of gross information and subsequent anxiety. Explore what works for you by defining your own needs and interests. Find the best match and fit for you. College selection is most rewarding when you find the correct fit.
- Keep it all in perspective. You are not an SAT or ACT number. GPA's and rankings are not measures of your self-worth. Do not lose your senior year to stress and worry associated with your college search and application process.
- Avoid the myth of the perfect school. Many people are surprised to find out that what they thought was the perfect school for them was far from it. Or, they are left searching when that school does not admit them. Rather, think in terms of four to five schools, all of which you would be happy and successful. Your attitude will determine how much you enjoy your experience and how much you get out of it.
- Being denied by a college is not the end of the world. If you receive a letter of rejection, pick up and move on. If you have followed a sound strategy, you will have other great options from which to choose.

### ❖ Shakespeare said, ***"Know thyself."***

That's good advice in general and great advice for college applicants. Make sure you understand your strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Honest self-examination is critical at the outset and throughout the process. Your interests can and will change daily. Look for consistency – what traits, interests and passions have been with you over time? Reflect on your learning style as well as preferences regarding living environment.

These are some of the things you will want to consider:

- Why do I want to go college? What are my long-term goals?

- Am I interested in a liberal arts institution, or do I want to specialize in a career or major, such as business, engineering, or nursing?
- Do I want to stay near home, or am I prepared to visit my family only a few times each year? Am I interested in a certain area? Urban, small town or rural?
- Do I want to attend a small or large institution? Am I interested in a diverse student body? Coed or single-sex school?
- Have my grades been good enough to be considered by a very selective school? Do I want a demanding academic environment? Do I plan to go to graduate school? Am I comfortable with a curriculum that offers a great deal of independent study? Do my academic interests require specialized facilities? Your college application strategy should begin with an honest appraisal of how you stack up as a competitive applicant. A frank assessment early on can save you much rejection grief down the road.
- Do I prefer on- or off-campus housing? Am I interested in fraternities or sororities? How important are intramural or intercollegiate athletics? Do I want a campus that regularly offers cultural events?
- How important will costs be in my final choice? What kind of financial assistance will I need? Are opportunities for part-time jobs important? What qualifications do I have for scholarships?
- Is there a special area of study that I'm particularly interested in, or do I want to pursue more general studies?

Feel free to add and consider your own questions. Remember that you are beginning the process of selecting your college. Don't be reluctant to express your true feelings. Perhaps you're unsure about some of the questions and answers. Maybe you think you're not ready to go away to school. It's OK to be apprehensive. Not everyone knows exactly what he or she wants at this time.

## Choose your College Priorities

Regardless of how prestigious a college is or how much it costs, college success is all about finding the right college fit. It won't matter if your parents graduated from there or if all of your high school friends plan to enroll there in the fall if the college isn't a good fit for you. This means finding a college that offers what you need in terms of academics, location, campus and social life.

*If these factors don't fit you, then little else will matter.*

The chart on the following page contains many college fit factors. Select the ones that are the most important to you. What do you need most to be comfortable and succeed? Prioritizing what matters to you will help you add or eliminate potential schools from your college search.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Academics</i>
Distance from home Weather Off-campus setting Geography: beaches, mountains	Majors offered Academic reputation Teaching Style Classes outside your major Class size
<i>Campus</i>	<i>Social Life</i>
Size Atmosphere Dorms Diversity Cost (tuition, room, board, fees) Financial aid	Clubs, sports, and recreational opportunities Art scene Greek life Going to college with friends from high school

## Meeting with your Counselor

When we meet, we will discuss things like your ideal college in relation to your academic profile (grades, test scores, activities, and course levels), your college major and career goals, your learning style, etc.

Before making an appointment with me, I will ask you to complete an “Initial College Survey” through Naviance that will help you identify your credentials and goals, list your strengths, and begin the process of determining which factors will be most important to you in your college search.

Using the information from these conversations, we can begin to develop a list of colleges that meet your criteria. Together we can determine the factors—from location to academic offerings—that matter most to you and create a college list that reflects those elements.

**During the course of the next few months, you are advised to <sup>\*</sup>:**

- ❖ **Cast your net broadly early in the process.** Collect as much information as possible from and about colleges. It is easily accessible and won’t cost anything. Use an online search program to sort for colleges that meet your personal and academic criteria. You can use the “College Super Match” on Naviance Student, simply search for the academic programs of interest or go to a website like the College Navigator <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> or College Board’s Big Future <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search> where you can do targeted college searches.
- ❖ **Then, narrow it down to a reasonable list of college candidates.**
  - a. Know *why* you’ve selected specific candidates.
  - b. **The best way to minimize rejections is to limit the number of schools from which you might be rejected.**

- c. How, then, should you think about spreading your candidates for maximum effect? You should probably have a “short list” of 6-8 colleges including colleges in each category of selectivity.

---

“Reach” schools will be the hardest to get into. While your academic credentials might suggest you are a qualified applicant at “reach” schools, they are not likely to put you “over the top” in the competition at those schools. “Likelies” offer good academic program fits along with admission standards that you should easily meet. The “target” group includes schools where you have a 50-50 chance of getting in. The best fits for you will come from this group.

---

- ❖ Treat “rankings” magazines as guides, not gospel. It makes sense to have a college guidebook or two handy for easy reference. Understand what you are buying, however. Some “ranking” magazines present the facts – and just the facts. Others will attempt to seduce you with comparative ratings and/or subjective reviews. While ratings can be helpful in getting you started, it would be risky to make financial choices based on this type of information. There are no reliable short cuts in the college search process.
- ❖ Visit college campuses. It is important to experience first-hand the campus culture of any college you are considering. Ethos matters. Take tours. Visit classes. *Whenever an interview is offered, take it!* Talk with students and faculty. Ask questions. You should be able to visualize yourself on that campus. Visit the schools you really like two or three times. Mix up your agenda with each visit. It is never too early to visit. You should try to visit at least once before you apply.
- ❖ Talk with recent OSSM graduates about their experience. Current students and recent graduates are the best evidence of the return you will get on your investment in the educational experience at a given college. Put them to the test. Facebook a message to them. Attend our alumni events. Ask them what they like and dislike? What were their most meaningful experiences?
- ❖ Examine Outcomes. If you have ideas regarding a major and/or career track, find out how recent graduates fared in these areas. You will discover quickly that a lot of colleges have a little bit of “something for everybody.” The truth is in the outcomes. Ask for evidence of graduate school and job placements. How does a particular college perform in these areas? Make sure the information is valid. Some colleges will tell you that they place 90% of their applicants to medical school. That’s great if there is volume and substance to the program. On the other hand, nine out of ten placements over three years doesn’t cut it.



- ❖ **Take an honest look at affordability.** Be prepared for sticker shock. The private college that cost \$15,000 for your parents twenty-five years ago now carries a price tag of \$55,000 (or more) today. This may or may not be an issue for them, but you need to find out. Ask your parents what they can or are willing to afford. It is better to know up front if there will be financial limitations on your college selections rather than finding out after you fall in love with a school that your family cannot afford it.
- ❖ **Resist the temptation to buy on impulse.** Start early as you look at colleges and shop late. First impressions often serve us well. Remember, though, that colleges spend hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to make that first impression a good. Test it. Revisit when not expected. Sleep on your feelings. Make sure the fascination persists for the right reasons. “This would be a great school because it puts me close to my grandparents,” or “That’s a great view of the mountains and the lifts are only a quarter of a mile away!” are not good reasons to buy. They are amenities that may come with a good choice; they don’t make a choice good.
- ❖ **Take note of how you are treated.** In the courtship between you and a college, the way an institution responds to you is a good indication of how that place will treat you once enrolled. Look past the fancy literature, the telemarketing and the staged visits. What happens when you email for specific information or call with a question? How are they treating you? At some colleges, the offer of acceptance is the strongest token of appreciation you will receive. Contrast that with the colleges that bend over backward to make you feel welcome. Which places a higher value on your participation?
- ❖ **Make sure you own the process.** Your parents are not going to college. They are very proud of you and want the best for you in college, but they’re staying home. This is your gig! The greater your involvement from start to finish, the more comfortable you will be with the outcomes.

*The greater your involvement from start to finish, the more comfortable you will be with the outcomes.*

## THREE MAJOR MISTAKES STUDENTS MAKE IN THE COLLEGE PLANNING PROCESS\*

Too often students become *spectators* in the college process. The goal is for students to become *participants*. Taking ownership of the process will ultimately lead to the most satisfying choices in the end. Satisfying outcomes will be largely dependent on the student’s ability to stay focused academically, while avoiding some of the common mistakes that doom otherwise very promising candidates.

You need to **make good choices, build relationships with colleges, and manage expectations.**

**Mistake #1:** Many students assume they don't have to worry about the admission process until they become formal applications.

**Reality:** Students become college applicants the day they become high school freshmen. Everything counts. In fact, every day presents opportunities for decision-making that will have a bearing on how you live the next day – and beyond.

**Remedy:** Make Good Choices

Key areas of choice involve academic preparedness, extracurricular engagement and the application process itself. While it is not healthy – or practical – to obsess on any of these, you need to understand your accountability for good decision-making. Choosing well at every turn strengthens your credentials and reduces the potential for discriminating admission committees to say “no.”

**Mistake #2:** Students don't take advantage of opportunities to get on the “radar screens” of college admission officers before they submit their applications.

**Reality:** Admission officers are looking for evidence of engaged interest. In fact, they are keeping track of a student's interest from his/her contact through the end of the admission process.

**Remedy: Build Relationships with Colleges**

It's very simple: if you like a college let them know that you like them. If they visit OSSM, come meet them, get their cards, find their contact info and email them a thank you, highlighting one or two specific things you liked about their presentation. (See “Appendix: Questions to ask a College Representative”)

If you can, visit the campus. Many colleges have a “point system” for contacts. A campus visit garners the highest point value a prospective student can receive. If you can't visit for whatever reason, then contact the admission officer, explain your reasoning why. Perhaps it's distance. Or financial obstacles. Or conflicts in your schedule. Whatever the deterrent, let the college know. This way they won't subtract points, but in fact, add additional points for your willingness to express your interest in the school in spite of being unable to visit.

*The best indicator to a college that you are a “high yield” prospect – that you are interested in matriculating – is the fact that you spent time on its campus.*

**Mistake #3:** Students assume that their grades/scores will “carry the day” and the more “reach” schools to which they apply, the better are the chances of getting into at least one.

**Reality:** It rarely works that way – especially if financial aid is needed. Not only is applying, somewhat arbitrarily, to a long list of schools likely to be an exercise in futility, it distracts students from giving quality attention to the applications they submit to colleges that represent the best fits for them.

**Remedy: Manage Expectations**

It is important to avoid confusing admissibility for competitiveness at a given college. The odds are that credentials put you in the top half – if not top quartile – of the admitted student profile from past entering classes. This will be an indicator that you are squarely on the “competitive playing field” at that school, and you are more likely to be valued for what you have to offer academically.

## THE ESSENTIAL DATA CHECKLIST\*

As you begin to receive college materials, develop a spreadsheet to chart critical information for each college and university.

Much of it can be found in the literature provided by the colleges or on their websites. List the following categories down the side of the page. Then, moving from left to right, create columns for each of the colleges in which you develop an interest.

- **APPLICATION FEE/DEADLINE:** You don’t want to be late when competing for admission. Create separate lines for the fee and the deadline. Under what conditions might the application fee be waived?
- **APPLICATION TYPE:** Does the college receive applications online? Is it a member of the Common Application?
- **INTERVIEW:** Is it offered and where (on campus or off-campus with a staff member or alumnus)? Take advantage of an interview if it is offered.
- **REQUIRED TESTS:** Beyond the SAT and/or ACT which most schools require, know which other tests (SAT Subject Tests) you need to be prepared to take. Create at least three lines on which you can list the dates for the tests that are required. Also be sure to find out if they will require the scores to be sent directly from the testing agency or if they are considered official if on the OSSM transcript.
- **TEST OPTIONAL:** More than 1,800 colleges and universities now welcome applications without testing. Go to [www.FairTest.org](http://www.FairTest.org) to find out if any of the schools you are considering have a test-optional admission policy.
- **LOCATION (CITY/STATE):** This will be helpful when you sort by preferred regions of the country.
- **PLACEMENT OF SCHOOL (URBAN, SUBURBAN, RURAL):** There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Make sure you know the type of community in which the school is located.
- **SIZE:** This may not seem important initially, but is often a determining factor after the data is collected and processed. Styles of instruction vary dramatically with size of institution.
- **TYPE OF SUPPORT (PUBLIC, PRIVATE):** This is another factor that is often underestimated as it often speaks to institutional mission.

- **STRUCTURE (COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY):** Schools vary in their complexity – and can offer programs that are similar in name only but feature styles of instruction as different as night and day. Again, there are advantages to each.
- **STUDENT/PROFESSOR RATIO:** These are important numbers that tell a lot about the accessibility of faculty. Make sure the ratio reflects undergraduates only as well as the professors who teach them.
- **PROGRAM:** Record the availability of key majors or programs in which you are interested. You may choose to add a notation that reflects the relative strength of program.
- **COST:** Sooner or later, you need to deal with issues of cost and affordability.
- **AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** Know what you might expect in terms of need and merit-based assistance. Each school has an **EFC calculator** on its website. USE IT—especially before signing an Early Decision (binding) agreement!
- **DISTANCE FROM HOME (TRAVEL TIME):** Some want to get away; others want to stay close. Travel time is more relevant than “miles to be traveled” if considering great distances.
- **TRAVEL COSTS:** Estimate round trip expenses. Make sure you know what it will cost to make the trip several times a year.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE VISITS?

Plan to visit colleges as early and often as possible. Talk with your parents about combining college visits with business trips, family gatherings and vacations. See as many places as possible early in your search. Even if a college does not appear on your list, spending time on its campus will give you valuable perspective for more informed decision-making later in the process. Besides, the things you discover at a previously unknown college may impress you. More than a few students have chosen colleges that emerged from such random visits.

## WHAT COLLEGES SHOULD I VISIT?

### Rocky Mountain

Colorado: CU-Boulder and CU-Colorado Springs, Colorado School of Mines, Colorado State U., Fort Lewis College, Mesa State College, Western State College, U. of Denver, Colorado College, Regis University

### Pacific Northwest

Washington: U. of Puget Sound, Whitman, Whitworth, Evergreen State, and U of Washington

Oregon: Lewis & Clark, Willamette, Reed, U. of Oregon, and Oregon State

California: Stanford, Santa Clara, U. of San Francisco, Claremont Colleges (Pomona, Harvey Mudd, Claremont, Scripps), Whittier, Occidental, Loyola Marymount, Univ. of San Diego, U. of Southern California, U. of California system (esp. Berkeley, Santa Barbara, LA, & Santa Cruz), Pepperdine

### Southwest

U. of Arizona, Arizona State, U. of Northern Arizona, U. of New Mexico, New Mexico State, College of Santa Fe, St. John's College

Texas & Louisiana: U. of Texas – Austin, Trinity, Southern Methodist, Rice, Texas Christian, Austin College, Southwestern, Loyola, Baylor, Tulane

### Northern Midwest

Montana: U. of Montana, Montana State

Minnesota: Carleton, Macalester, U of Minnesota Twin Cities, and St. Olaf

Wisconsin: U. of Wisconsin, Ripon, St. Lawrence University, and Beloit

Michigan: U. of Michigan, Michigan State, Hope, Kalamazoo

### Midwest

Illinois: U. of Chicago, Northwestern, Knox, Loyola, U of Illinois (Champagne), Illinois Institute of Technology

Iowa: Cornell College, Grinnell, and Coe College

Nebraska: Creighton University, University of Nebraska

Ohio: Kenyon, Oberlin, Denison, Wittenberg, Xavier, Ohio Wesleyan, College of Wooster, Miami (Oxford), Hiram, Case Western Reserve

Indiana: Indiana U., Notre Dame, DePauw, Earlham, Butler, and U of Evansville

Missouri: Washington U., St. Louis U., U. of Missouri – Columbia, Westminster, William Jewell Kansas: U. of Kansas, Kansas State, Southwestern, University of Missouri—Kansas City Arkansas: U of Arkansas, John Brown Univ., Hendrix College

### Mid-Atlantic:

Pennsylvania: Bucknell U., Franklin and Marshall, Dickinson, Gettysburg, Bryn Mawr (women), Haverford, Villanova, Lafayette, Lehigh, Carnegie Mellon, U. of Pennsylvania, Allegheny, Drexel

New York: Colgate, Hamilton, Hobart & William Smith, Cornell, Rochester, Ithaca College, Union, Skidmore, Vassar, Sarah Lawrence, New York U., Columbia, Fordham, Bard, Barnard (women), City College

New Jersey: Princeton, Drew

Maryland: Johns Hopkins, Washington College, and U of Maryland

Washington, DC: Georgetown, George Washington, American, Howard (HBCU\*)

*Whenever you visit a college campus, make sure you sign in at the admission office. Complete the form. Fill out the card, even if it is the second or third time you visited.*

**DO WHATEVER IT TAKES  
TO MAKE SURE THEY  
KNOW YOU WERE THERE.**

### Northern New England

New Hampshire: Dartmouth, U. of New Hampshire, Keene State College, Colby Sawyer College

Vermont: U. of Vermont, Middlebury

Maine: Colby, Bates, Bowdoin, College of the Atlantic

### Southern New England

Boston Area: Boston College, Boston U., Tufts, Brandeis, Babson, Bentley, Emerson, Simmons (women), Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Wheaton, Wellesley (women),

### Northeastern

Western Massachusetts: Amherst, Hampshire, Williams, Smith (women), Clark, Holy Cross, Worcester Polytechnic

Connecticut: Trinity, Yale, Connecticut College, Fairfield University, U. Conn

Rhode Island: Brown, Rhode Island School of Design, Salve Regina, Roger Williams, U. of Rhode Island, Providence College, Bryant.

### Southeast

Alabama: Auburn University, Alabama

Georgia: Emory, Georgia Tech, UGA

Kentucky: Centre College

Tennessee: Vanderbilt, Belmont, U. of the South (Sewanee), Rhodes, U. of Tennessee

North Carolina: UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, Wake Forest, Davidson, Guilford, Elon, UNC-Asheville

South Carolina: College of Charleston, U. of South Carolina, Furman, Wofford, Clemson, Presbyterian.

Virginia: U. of Virginia, Richmond, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Hampden-Sydney (men), Randolph, Washington & Lee, William & Mary, Mary Washington, Hampton (HBCU\*), Virginia Tech, Shenandoah

Florida: U. of Miami, Rollins, Eckerd, Flagler, U. of Florida, Florida State

*\*HBCU= Historically Black Colleges and Universities*

## WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK ON A COLLEGE VISIT?

You won't find much from just walking around looking at the buildings. Make the college trip worthwhile by asking questions. The lists below give you plenty to choose from.

### Questions to ask Students:

- Has going here turned out like you expected? Any surprises or disappointments?
- What are the best reasons to go here?
- What do students complain about?
- I have to choose a dorm. What can you tell me about the choices?
- How's the food?
- What kind of meal plan makes the most sense?
- What is there to do off-campus? What can you tell me about the choices?
- What do most students do for fun on weekends?
- How often do students go home on weekends?
- Where do most students hang out on campus?
- Can you study in the dorms? If not, where do you go to study?
- Do you use the library often? Is it easy to find what you need there?
- How's the bookstore? Can you find the books you need there? Is it easy to get used textbooks?
- How is the campus network? Does it go down often?
- I know it depends on your major, but in general, what's the workload like?
- How are the professors? Are they hard to reach outside of class?
- What professor as a freshman do I have to study with?
- How would you rate the courses you've taken so far?
- Would you characterize this college as mostly liberal, conservative, or open-minded?
- Do you get much help finding internships or jobs?
- Do most students join fraternities? Or sororities?
- Tell me about a couple of interesting traditions on campus?
- Is the campus safe both during the day and night?
- How would you describe the relationship between students and the administration?

### Questions to ask the Tour Guide:

- How popular is the recreation/sports/fitness center? Is it crowded often?
- Where do you do laundry? Is it convenient? Will I need to hoard quarters?
- Is there any overcrowding in the dorms (three in a double, for example?)

- Do many resident students have cars? Is there enough parking?
- I'm thinking of majoring in \_\_\_\_\_ ? What relevant facilities should I see?
  
- Where can you get something to eat after the cafeteria is closed?
- How large are most classes? Do many take place in auditoriums?
- What are the most popular extracurricular activities?
- Are there many intramural or club sports?
- Are there enough computers, printers, and copy machines available? What about at night?
- Does student government play much of a role on campus?

### Questions to ask at the Admissions Office:

- When does registration take place for freshman? What is the registration procedure?
- Do freshmen have to take any placement exams
- What sort of job placement or career counseling is available before graduation?
- How much should I expect tuition to increase over the next four years?
- Who should I speak to about financial aid?
- Is there a course catalog I can take with me?

## WHAT SHOULD BE ON MY COLLEGE VISIT CHECKLIST?

Visiting college campuses is important to help you determine what type of school you are looking for (i.e.: big school, small school, urban, or small town). Visiting can also occur at two other points in the process: when a student is trying to decide which school to apply to or when a student has been accepted to the institution.

---

*The visit is essentially to observe the school in motion and to determine how you fit there. Keep in mind this question: "Can I see myself here?"*

---

**Whenever you visit a college campus, make sure you sign in at the admission office.** Complete the form. Fill out the card, even if it is the second or third time you visited. **Do whatever it takes to make sure they know you were there.** This is particularly true of visits prior to the time when admission decisions are made.

Before you hop in the car, you will want to research the school as much as possible so that when you arrive, you can ask the questions that can't be answered by a view book. In addition, you need to call the institution to schedule your visit. As soon as you know the date you would like to visit, phone the college and let them know you are coming. In turn, the college will send you a confirmation letter with directions, a campus map, and maybe even area hotels and local attractions.

While on campus:

- Sit in on one or two classes, if possible.
- Look at the dormitory rooms.
- Check on dining facilities. Visit the library.
- If you are interested in science, visit the laboratories.
- Check on social, cultural, religious, and recreational facilities.
- Talk informally with students.
- Read the student handbook and the college newspaper.

The admissions officer will probably give you a frank evaluation of your chances for admission and tell you what you need to do, but do not try to pressure him (or let your parents do it) into making an immediate, on-the-spot decision.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGE

## APPLICATION STRATEGIES

- Apply to a few schools with a wide range of selectivity **Avoid the high-risk trap of applying only to competitive schools with selective admission. The goal should be for you to have some options in the spring of your senior year.**
- All students should submit at least one application by November 1st. Applying to your likely school early (October or November) will allow you to start the process off with some good news and will give you assurance that you will have a place to go next year. You might be surprised by how much anxiety is relieved when you receive your first acceptance letter.
- Explore early action (non-binding) and early decision (binding) options but be aware that these options may not be the best for you. Discuss your options and strategies with your counselor.
- Visit the colleges that are high on your list. Offices of admission keep track of student visits as well as communications such as phone calls and e-mails. This helps them differentiate between an application from a sincerely interested student and a last-minute application completed on-line as an afterthought.
- Get organized. Develop a spreadsheet or create a file to keep track of your applications/requirements/deadlines. Attached is a “College Application Worksheet” to help you. Make copies and keep one for each college to which you are applying.

## The Common Application

**The Common Application** is a standardized application used by more than 1,000 colleges. Instead of filling out eight different applications, you can simply fill out one and submit it to each college.

Be aware that you may need to submit additional or separate documents to some colleges. No two schools will have the exact same requirements – therefore your application process will vary for each school on your list. You also still need to pay individual application fees for each college.

**Students can create an account at [apply.commonapp.org](https://apply.commonapp.org).** Accounts created this year will roll over. Any student who is not planning to enroll in college in the next 12 months should select “Other student” on the registration page. The student’s user name and Common App ID will all be preserved.

## Gather Your General Application Information

While every school has a different list of college-specific requirements, the general application information (for the Common App) will remain constant for all schools on your list. You’ll be asked to list your high school grades and courses, along with your activities, entrance exam scores and exam dates, and parent or legal guardian information.

---

*Get a head start and save yourself time by collecting this information before you fill out the application. You’ll be glad you did!*

---

### What you'll need for every application:

- A copy of your high school transcript
- A list of your extracurricular activities both inside and outside of school
- Test scores and test dates from your college entrance exams
  - (SAT/ACT/SAT subject tests)
- Parent / legal guardian information
  - (Educational background, occupational information, employer information, etc.)

## WHAT IF I AM INTERESTED IN APPLYING TO U.S. MILITARY ACADEMIES?

For a four-year college degree you may consider one of the five military academies:

- U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis, MD)
- U.S. Military Academy (West Point, NY)
- U.S. Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, CO)
- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point, NY)
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy (New London, CT)



UNITED STATES  
NAVAL ACADEMY  
HONOR... COURAGE... COMMITMENT



U.S. AIR FORCE  
ACADEMY



UNITED STATES  
COAST GUARD  
ACADEMY



Students who are interested in pursuing the academies should begin preparations right away! This is not a decision to be made lightly as entrance to one of the academies requires a five-year military obligation (post-graduation) as an officer in the respective service.

---

*Some of the benefits include: A first-rate education, full-tuition scholarship, a distinct college experience, and a guaranteed job after college.*

---

Admission to a service academy is extremely competitive. Students must be in good academic standing with high grades and test scores, and advanced courses. Applicants must also be in good physical condition. All of the federal service academies, except the Coast Guard, require nomination primarily by a congressman. Most members of Congress do not accept requests for nomination after October of the senior year. Therefore, students are encouraged to contact their congressmen in the spring of the junior year.

Students are also encouraged to attend the **Summer Leadership Academy** to experience life as a cadet to inform their college selection decision. Admission is very competitive, and applications open mid-January.

## Timeline for Military Applications:

### Sophomore Year

- Contact a representative of the Academy to learn about the application requirements.

### Junior Year

- Research the Websites.
- Contact your congressional representatives and request a nomination to the academy or academies of your choosing.
- Mid-January, apply for the Summer Leadership Academy  
<http://www.usma.edu/admissions/SitePages/Summer.aspx>  
<https://www.usna.edu/Admissions/Programs/NASS/>  
<http://www.academyadmissions.com/admissions/outreach-programs/summer-seminar/>
- In the spring and summer, work on your Physical Aptitude Exam (PAE), take your medical exams, visit the academies.
- In the summer, work on applications.

### Senior Year

- In the early fall, submit applications to academy.
- Nomination applications usually due in October.
- Complete medical and physical aptitude tests if necessary.
- In November, interview for your congressional nomination.

## LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

Letters of recommendation are read in conjunction with the student's transcript, test scores, and information provided by the student on the application.

Recommendations from counselors and teachers can bring the student to life for the

admissions committee. Usually a college admissions office requires, for applicants, one of the following:

- ✓ A letter of recommendation from a counselor; or
- ✓ A letter of recommendation from a counselor and one from a teacher; or
- ✓ A letter of recommendation from a counselor and two from teachers.

In addition, colleges may ask for a personal recommendation from someone not connected with the applicant's school (mentor, employer, minister).

Recommendations can play a pivotal role in the application process. In particular, students with mediocre grades or lower test scores can benefit from an honest presentation of their potential for success in college. A clearly written, informative assessment can go a long way in establishing the student's credibility with the admissions office.

## ASKING FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

### ➤ *Ask your college counselor*

Follow the same protocol for asking for a recommendation from me as you would your teacher recommender.

1. Ask me in person.
2. Fill out the Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire sent to you in the summer.
3. Provide a resume, either through Naviance or other.
4. Make sure we have had a conference prior to the request, so that I can get to know you and write you a most informed and personal recommendation.



### ➤ *Ask the right teacher*

You're asking the right teacher if:

- ✓ The teacher has taught you in class your junior or senior year
- ✓ The teacher can reflect on your intellectual growth
- ✓ The teacher has taught you in a core academic discipline
- ✓ The teacher would be able to tell a good story about you
- ✓ The teacher agrees to write your letter without hesitation
- ✓ The teacher knows you outside the classroom
- ✓ The teacher can assess your academic and personal achievements and potential

---

*If more than three of these are not true, you may want to ask a different teacher!*

---

## Advice from the University of Virginia:

*We want you to pick the teacher who you think has the best insight into your **classroom performance and style**. Who might talk about your role in class discussion or your style when working on a group project? Who might have a story about you working really hard to get through a particularly different concept? That's the teacher you should ask!*

*These recommendations aren't about summarizing information we will learn from other parts of the application, so I don't recommend giving your teacher your activity list. You could remind them about the project you did that impressed them or about the time they asked to hold onto something you did so they could use it as an example. Those little anecdotes bring the data that we get in the rest of the application to life.*

*If you feel like your style is dramatically different in different classrooms, it might make sense to send an extra teacher recommendation.*

### ➤ *Make the request early*

1. *At least three weeks in advance*—Start by going to your teacher in person at to ask them for a letter of recommendation. Your future hangs in the balance here, so don't leave this to an email. Be appropriately thankful when your teacher says “yes.” Weep tears of undying gratitude as needed.
  2. Follow up on that in-person request with a request on Naviance Student (see instructions) specifying exactly what you need for your recommendation.
  3. There is a section that allows you to write a note to your recommender. This can include special instructions such as a different deadline, a note on your brag sheet or resume.
    - You can say, “Attached, you will find my Brag Sheet which lists my strengths and accomplishments to use in your letter. While I would be happy for you to include any of the attached information, I would most appreciate you focusing on the following characteristics and achievements:”  
  
...and then list a few things. They may or may not use them, but they will appreciate your input.
- ✓ The deadline and where to upload or send the requested letter.
  - ✓ A sincere “Thank You.”

i.e. “Thank you very much for your time and for your valuable recommendation.”

NOW THAT YOU'VE PLACED YOUR FUTURE IN YOUR TEACHER'S HANDS, HERE ARE THREE THINGS YOU ABSOLUTELY SHOULD NOT DO UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES:

- Nag your teacher.
- Nag your teacher some more.
- Use your psychic powers to nag your teacher in their dreams.

But seriously, give your teacher the time they need to write that epic letter of recommendation. Most teachers have been through this rodeo before and will get your rec in with time to spare.

That being said, this is your college application we're talking about, and knowing the letter submission deadlines is on you. If your recommendation needs to be submitted by Friday, and your teacher hasn't submitted it yet, then, for the love of Pete, ask what's up.

A simple, verbal “thank you” is nice...although extra karma points if you handwrite a thank you note. A cookie bouquet is probably extreme—it's too late for bribery by snickerdoodles. However you choose to say thanks, be sincere.

## TRANSCRIPTS

A transcript is an official and legal document, which is a record of a student's academic performance in high school. Courses taken at OSSM and your home high school are included on the transcript and all semester and year-end grades as well as the suggested grade scale equivalents and ranking and GPA information. While we can release unofficial copies of transcripts to students and families, official transcripts must be mailed directly from OSSM to the colleges/universities/programs. Official transcripts include the registrar's signature and the official school seal.

### Procedure for requesting a transcript:

***All transcript requests must go through a counselor.***

As soon as you apply to a college, request that an official transcript be sent to that school. Follow the following procedure for requesting a transcript:

1. Fill out a transcript request on Naviance:
  - Under the “Colleges” tab, see “Colleges I’m Applying To.”
  - If it's for a college application, click on “Request Transcripts” or “Manage Transcripts.”
  - ***Important:*** Make sure to indicate HOW it is to be delivered to the college. If you are applying through the Common App, make sure the college is on your CA list and indicate that on the request. If a school is NOT on the Common App, indicate that you will be applying directly to the institution.
  - If it is NOT for a college application (i.e. scholarship/personal), click on “Manage Transcripts” and choose “Other Transcript”

# THE COLLEGE RÉSUMÉ

## WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE ON THE RÉSUMÉ?

At the Harvard Summer Institute, representatives from Harvard, Duke, Northwestern, Georgetown, and Penn concurred that the slick, high-octane, professionally produced, “Mother Teresa-meet-Bono saintly activist” résumés from high school students were indications that the students were being “packaged” and did not benefit the students’ applications. Students tend to come off, in their words, “embellished,” “disingenuous,” “cosmetically altered.”

What, then, are college admissions looking for in the résumé?

In a *USA Today* article, Pomona College dean of admission, Bruce Poch, noted that the “engaged student radiates excitement and connection to the greater world around her. When kids aren’t gaming the system, their personal résumés and statements will match the picture painted by counselors and teachers.” The goal then is that the résumé’ bleeds authenticity and passion.

To many college admissions people, the real story in your résumé lies in how and what you achieved as well as your capacity to build upon that achievement. In other words, **colleges are looking for thickness—evidence of substance.** “One-year wonders” don’t cut it. Neither do the stretched thin “do-everythings.” The most important question then for you to answer is this one: **What is your fire?**

## Ten “Do’s” on the College Application Résumé

1. Use action verbs in short statements for greater effect. Complete sentences are not needed.
2. Begin with the strongest statements when describing accomplishments.
3. List time involved in activities as hours/week, weeks/year.
4. The arrangement of the sections is flexible based on what you want to highlight.
5. Your activities should be listed in order of importance to you, which may or may not be in reverse chronological order.
6. Mention unique items that make you stand out from the crowd.
7. Be consistent. Inconsistency can make your resume difficult to read. Don't bold one heading and not the next. Don't put a period at the end of one description and not at the end of others. Don't use multiple fonts. Etc.
8. Provide your resume to anyone you have asked to write a letter of recommendation.
9. Have someone else look over your resume before you send it anywhere.
10. PROOFREAD!!!

## Ten “Don't Do's” on the College Application Résumé

1. Avoid personal pronouns and vague descriptions (i.e. instead of “I have excellent research skills” write “Received merit award for three major research projects”).

2. "Who's Who Among American High School Students" and other similar "awards" are not considered by colleges/universities to be legitimate.
3. "-th" does not belong. Simply use (9,10,11,12) to indicate the grade level during which a particular activity was performed instead of (9th,10th,11th,12th). Those *th* notations can become difficult to read when the admission representative has reviewed 50+ other files that same day.
4. There is no need to double up on your academic record. Your official transcript is where the admission office will refer for course selection, test scores, and grades earned...not your student resume.
5. Eighth grade does not count. Your resume should be based upon your accomplishments in high school, not what you did in grade school or junior high. Exceptions might be (as an example) a particular activity that you started in seventh grade and continue to do consistently now.
6. Don't include your school's contact information on your resume. That information is included in other places within your application for admission. Save the space to highlight your own personal achievements.
7. Skip the abbreviations. Opt to spell out National Honor Society (NHS), Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), and similarly named student organizations.
8. Don't turn your resume into a novel. Remember, this is your resume, not your essay.
9. Don't let information get away! Keep a block of text for a particular activity on the same page. This may require moving margins, deleting extra words, etc. You don't want the reader to forget what the activity was when they have to flip the page to continue reading.
10. Do not submit a first draft of your resume. Take time to edit and revise, just as you will do for your essay. Get your resume to a perfect state now, so that you have it ready to submit with each application for admission and scholarship. Just make updates as they occur.

## THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

### WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW?

The college interview is another chance to tell your story directly. The interview's notes will be added to your application file where they can provide valuable contextual understanding of your performance and perspectives. A face to –face meeting also provides your interviewer with a better opportunity to put a name with a face –and to be your advocate late in the process.

In the INTERVIEW itself:

- Take a resume to give the interviewer. Offer it to them; some may want it, some may not. Better safe than sorry.
- Dress neatly and appropriately. (Remember that this is a mutual selection process, and you are on exhibit during the interview.)
- Be friendly, relaxed, and courteous. Talk freely about your accomplishments or talents, but don't brag about them
- Be prompt. If your interview is scheduled for 10:00 AM, be there at that time or slightly earlier. But don't be late! If you find that you will be unavoidably delayed, telephone and apologize in advance.
- Don't ask questions about things you could have learned by reading the catalog. Your questions should show that you have done some serious thinking and reading about colleges in general and about that college in particular.
- Natural flow of conversation: student > student + school > student + community > student + college

## Being Competitive: The Standout Factor

There are more than 26,000 high schools in the United States. That means there are 26,000 student council presidents, 26,000 (+) valedictorians and 26,000 yearbook editors. If you want to stand out to a college, you've got to really stand out.

There is a very powerful way to differentiate you from other students applying to college: Ensure you have a Standout Factor. The most interesting Standout Factors are activities that are typically dominated by adults, or noteworthy tasks that no other high school student does. Either way, a Standout Factor will help you differentiate yourself from other applicants.

### How to Tell If it's a Standout Factor

If other high school students do it, it's not a Standout Factor. Also, the more positive impact your standout activity has on others, the better.

### How to Increase Your Standout Factor

It's simple. Do something that you wouldn't normally consider doing. Standout Factors are not run-of-the-mill activities. Make an impact in your community. Invent something. Help run a political campaign. Start a community charity or volunteer organization.

## What will be *your* standout factor?

Reflect on your life experience. What about your background or heritage gives you a different perspective? Why? What has it taught you? How do you see the world differently because of who you are?

To brainstorm these questions, list the differences or points of distinction in your background—what sets you apart from your peers? Indicate how these differences have influenced your life and how, by sharing them, you could make an impact on a college environment.

---

---

---

List the talents, interests, and perspectives that set you apart from your peers. Choose one that means the most to you. Then, in 100 words or less, describe how that “gift” emerged in your life and why it could make an impact in a college environment.

---

---

---

---

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Useful Websites

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) Tools to find the perfect college match and explore careers and majors. It also includes several helpful financial aid topics and tools and a scholarship search, SAT/AP information and the CSS PROFILE.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search> College Board’s college match and career/major search engine

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org) ACT registration, general college information, financial aid estimator

[www.accunet.org](http://www.accunet.org) Links for virtual college campus tours

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) Common Application online

[www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com) Princeton Review

[www.universityofcalifornia.edu](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu) University of California system

[The Scoir College Network | Scoir](#)--

[www.cappex.com](http://www.cappex.com) This website allows you to create a profile and search for colleges that fit your needs, find scholarships that match your skills and strengths, compare colleges, and read reviews to see what students say about each school. It also includes a “What Are My Chances Calculator,” a “College Fit Meter” along with other fun features to help with the college search.

[www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com) College search, reviews, and scholarships

<http://www.chegg.com/>

[www.collegeconfidential.com](http://www.collegeconfidential.com)

## Appendix B: Questions to ask a College Representative

College reps genuinely enjoy talking to you. They like to share their ideas about their college, and they appreciate students who have thought about the college and want to know more than is in the course catalog.

*Are you wondering how to start a conversation with a college rep?* Here are some tips for conversing and getting answers to important questions. It's a good idea to write out a list of things that are important to you before you go.

Don't feel like you have strange priorities or weird questions if something off-beat is interesting to you. College reps hear the same questions all the time, so they'll be glad to hear something new. If you wonder about the potential for racial tension or if you're worried about spiders in the dorms, go ahead and ask about it.

- Start off with "Hello, how are you?" or "Hi, my name is..." for a relaxed beginning to your conversation.
- Try not to ask a vague question like "Tell me about your college," since the rep will have no idea where to start. That can be frustrating for the college rep and the student because the conversation will have no direction.
- Be specific with questions by saying things like "Tell me about class spirit" or "Can you give me examples of some campus traditions," instead. Those types of questions will give you a sense of the atmosphere and give the rep something specific to talk about.
- Ask for a list of majors that you can take with you and look over later.
- Ask about the enrollment deadline and the recommendations for taking the SAT. Some colleges will need scores earlier.
- Ask if subject scores (like SAT II Math or History) are required or recommended.
- Feel free to ask if the rep can waive your application fee but know that this usually works best at private colleges.

- Ask if there are any scholarship secrets. There are many little-known tricks that differ from college to college, but the conversation doesn't always get around to this in a rushed environment.
- You will want to know the admission requirements, of course, but you may also want to ask whether admissions officers make decisions on numbers, or if they really do consider activities. Some colleges go by scores and grades and follow a formula. Other colleges really give greater weight to activities, experience, and interests.
- Ask if a student leader can contact you to give you a student's perspective. Provide an email address for this.
- Go ahead and ask about the food. Sometimes there are many choices and other times there aren't. Remember, you'll have to live with it for four years.
- Find out the safety history of the campus *and the surrounding town*. Sometimes the campus rests in an area where high crime takes place just outside the area considered the campus. A representative may not mention this. This is also something you should research on your own, before you get too attached to the dream. Be safe!
- Ask how many of the students drop out, transfer away, or how many stay and graduate. College reps may cringe at this one, because student retention is a touchy issue at many colleges. A low retention rate may be a warning sign, though.
- Ask: "What's the biggest complaint from current students?"
- Find out if the administration listens to student concerns. This is one of the things you might want to ask a student leader.
- Is tutoring available? Find out if tutoring is free.
- If class size is important, ask about it. Keep in mind, however, that class sizes are less important when good individual tutoring is available.
- Ask if you'll have to pay for parking or if you'll have to walk a million miles from parking lot to classes.
- If you are very conservative or very liberal in your thinking, ask about the political/social climate. This is one of the things that could cause a feeling of discomfort or alienation down the road. It's not a silly question.

### **More questions to ask...**

#### *Academics*

- What is distinctive about education here? What is the educational philosophy of the college? Has it changed much in recent years?
- What is the most popular major on campus? Why? Do you have those in which I am interested?
- Do you have to declare a major when you apply?

- Do you think that students are generally enthusiastic about their classes? Do people talk about their courses outside of class?
- How would you characterize the academic pressure and workload?
- What unique programs are incorporated into your school's curriculum?
- Are any new programs scheduled for the next four years?
- How easy is it for freshmen to get classes?
- What's the largest class on campus? The smallest?
- What types of internships are available?
- Are there study abroad opportunities?
- What additional academic services are offered to students (tutoring, career counseling, study skills workshops)
  - How does your career planning department compare with other colleges/universities?
- What percentage of students find summer internships before graduating?
- What percentage find jobs upon graduation?
- What/how many companies recruit on campus?
- Where do students typically work after graduation?
- Are there internship fairs on campus? Are there job fairs on campus?

#### *Admissions*

- What are the application deadlines for admission?
- What is the average high school GPA of the entering freshman class?
- ACT or SAT?
- Do you offer early decision or early admission?
- What if I don't meet the admissions requirements?
- What kind of financial aid is available?
- What types of scholarships are available?
- Is your college "need blind" in the admissions process—do you determine admission without regard to a student's financial situation?

#### *Faculty*

- Are there research possibilities with the faculty? In what areas?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the advising system?
- What is the quality of student and faculty relationships? Is the faculty interested in and accessible to students after class?
- Are professors available to give individual attention to students if requested?

#### *Students*

- How would you characterize the majority of students?
- What kinds of students are happiest at this school?
- What do students like most about the college? Like least?
- What political, social, or academic issues concerned students last year? How did the administration react? What was the resolution?
- What is the school culture like?
- How often do students go off campus and where do they go?
- What are some popular clubs, events, activities?

### *Social life and campus activities*

- What do students do for fun?
- What is the role of fraternities and sororities on campus? If I didn't want to join, could I have a satisfactory social life?
- What are the dominant social groups on campus? Do the groups get along with one another? Have there been any problems?
- What role do team sports play in the social life of the college? What happens on football or basketball weekends? If I didn't want to join in, would I find kindred spirits?
- Is there a good balance of academics, social life, and extracurricular activities?
- What were the social or cultural highlights last year?
- Do students feel safe on campus?

### *The community*

- What is there to do in town? How would I get there?
- What is the climate during the school year?

### *Campus facilities*

#### *Housing and dining*

- Is there something I should know about housing that would help me in my choice?
- What are the types of food plans? All you can eat? Vegetarian? Kosher?

#### *Activity centers and athletic and recreational facilities*

- What kinds of facilities does the student center have? Is it a magnet for student activities? Are there other hangouts?
- How would you rate the fitness center?
- How good is the security on campus?

#### *Library*

- What have been students' experiences with the library? Have there been complaints?
- Is the library well equipped with computers and copy machines?

## Appendix C: Some common terms in college admissions

- ❖ **Holistic Admissions**—Review process that looks beyond test scores and grades
- ❖ **Direct Educational Cost**—Amount due to the college for room, board, tuition, fees, and cost of books
- ❖ **EFC—Expected Family Contribution.** Estimate how much the student's family will be expected to contribute for the year. If you're unable to contribute the entire cost of college, financial aid is available to bridge the gap. That's how the financial aid system works. The difference between the total cost and the student's EFC is considered the student's financial need and the amount of aid you're eligible to receive.
- ❖ **Net Price Calculator**—Link posted on each college website to estimate applicant's cost of attendance. Net price is the full cost of attendance minus the grants and scholarships you receive from the college. A college's net price calculator uses the financial aid policies of that college to calculate its estimate.

- ❖ **FAFSA**-- To apply for *federal student aid*, you need to complete the *FAFSA*® (the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*). Federal Student Aid is responsible for managing the student financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. These programs provide grants, loans, and work-study funds to students attending college or career school. <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>
- ❖ **CSS PROFILE**-- the College Scholarship Service Profile, is an application distributed by the College Board in the United States allowing college students to apply for financial aid. It is much more detailed than the FAFSA. Along with the FAFSA, the CSS Profile is the most common financial aid application that students in the United States fill out. Each CSS Profile costs a fee, varying from year to year. <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>
- ❖ **CANDIDATE'S REPLY DATE** - A college may require an applicant to notify the college by this date as to the intentions of the applicant to enroll in that college. Common reply date is May 1.
- ❖ **DEFERRED** – Candidate not accepted during Early Action or Early Decision Admission may be reconsidered along with the Regular Decision applicants.
- ❖ **WAIT LIST** – The college admission committee has favorably considered your application but is over subscribed. Your application will be considered, likely in late spring or early summer, depending on space available (Do not get your hopes up, especially at very selective colleges).

## Early Decision/Early Action/Restrictive Early Action

- ❖ **Early Action (EA) I and II**—In this non-binding application program, a student usually applies EA I on or before the first of November (sometimes Nov. 15) and receives an admission decision by the middle of December. If accepted, the student is **not obligated to commit to the college until the mandatory May 1 "college deadline day."** EA II is a second chance to apply early at the beginning or middle of January, with a response back from a college sometime four, six, eight weeks out. Early Action colleges usually allow students to apply to other EA schools.
- ❖ **Early Decision (ED) I and II**—In this binding application program, a student applies on or before Nov. 1 (sometimes Nov. 15) and then receives his or her admission decision by the middle of December. **If accepted, the student is obligated to attend that college.** (Upon acceptance, a student must withdraw all other applications.) If he/she does not get admitted to an ED college, the applicant can then apply ED II to another college with a later deadline. Some Early Decision colleges even allow students to apply to other early application programs, as long as they are not binding; but others don't. Check this out on the admission section of colleges' websites.
- ❖ **Restrictive Early Action (aka, single-choice early action), --REA** is a non-binding early action admission option in which a student **may not apply to any other private schools' early program, except:**
  - ✓ A college outside of the US
  - ✓ A non-binding rolling admission program

- ✓ A public college or university whose admission is not binding.
  - ✓ An ED II program, if notification of admission occurs after January 1
- ❖ Like EA applicants, a student has until May 1 to decide if they want to attend the college or university. Schools that offer REA programs are Boston College, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale. Applicants are asked to sign a statement stipulating that they agree to file only one early application.
  - ❖ **Regular Decision (RD)** involves a non-binding application deadline from January 1 to February 15, with most deadlines in January. Decisions are generally mailed in the spring, usually in late March or early April, and students have until May 1 to make a deposit at the college that they will be attending and to notify other colleges that have offered them acceptances that they will be attending elsewhere. Rolling Admission (RA) involves a non-binding commitment and allows students to apply between August and May. Typically, large state universities like OU and OSU are rolling; however, sometimes admissions officers won't begin reading applications in early October, and the applicant is notified a certain time after the application file is complete (generally 4 to 6 weeks). Again, students have until May 1 to send in their deposit.
  - ❖ **Rolling admission**--This is an application program at some schools -- usually larger public universities -- in which applications are accepted, evaluated, and decided upon as they are received. Applications are accepted until the college fills all of its spaces. There is no limit to the number of Rolling Admissions schools to which you can apply even if you apply to EA, ED, or REA colleges.

## Appendix D: Scholarship Search

- ❖ Federal Student Aid-- <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types> ;  
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/finding-scholarships>
- ❖ Questbridge National College Match—Very competitive! Helps outstanding low-income high school seniors gain admission and full four-year scholarships to the nation's most selective colleges [www.questbridge.org](http://www.questbridge.org)
- ❖ Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA) [www.ledascholars.org](http://www.ledascholars.org)
- ❖ OK Collegestart—this site has tools to help you search for financial aid and scholarships at the state as well as national level. It's a great list of Oklahoma scholarships and even includes links to the applications.  
[https://secure.okcollegestart.org/Financial\\_Aid\\_Planning/Scholarships/default.aspx](https://secure.okcollegestart.org/Financial_Aid_Planning/Scholarships/default.aspx)
- ❖ Oklahoma City Community Foundation (OCCF) [www.occf.org](http://www.occf.org)
- ❖ Community Foundation of Oklahoma—100 different scholarship funds created by donors across Oklahoma. <http://www.cfok.org/>
- ❖ Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education— [www.okhighered.org](http://www.okhighered.org)

- ❖ OKCollege Start .org –links to scholarships both local and national  
[https://secure.okcollegestart.org/Financial\\_Aid\\_Planning/Scholarships/Scholarship\\_Links.aspx](https://secure.okcollegestart.org/Financial_Aid_Planning/Scholarships/Scholarship_Links.aspx)
- ❖ Tuition Funding Sources – <http://www.tuitionfundingsources.com/>
- ❖ STEM Scholarship Search— <http://stemstudy.com/stem-scholarship-search/>
- ❖ U.S. News—Browse STEM scholarships for each type of college student.  
<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2015/09/29/browse-stem-scholarships-for-each-type-of-college-student>
- ❖ National Society of High School Scholars Foundation—STEM scholarships for underrepresented groups. <http://nshssfoundation.org/scholarships/stem-scholarships/>
- ❖ Engineer Girl—for women in STEM. <http://www.engineergirl.org/9539.aspx>
- ❖ Best Colleges— <http://www.bestcolleges.com/financial-aid/>
- ❖ Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund (APIA)--<http://www.apiasf.org/>
- ❖ Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) [www.hsf.net](http://www.hsf.net)
- ❖ United Negro College Fund (UNCF) [www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org)
- ❖ FinAid-- <http://www.finaid.org/>
- ❖ GoodCall-- <https://www.goodcall.com/scholarships>
- ❖ FastWeb --This is the most popular scholarship engine online. It is owned by Monster.com, a for-profit company whose main line of business is an online job search service.  
<http://www.fastweb.com/>
- ❖ FindTuition.com-- a for-profit company founded by researchers experienced in locating and verifying scholarships.
- ❖ Peterson's --a for-profit company that publishes information both online and offline and provides admissions services to students. [www.petersons.com/college-search/scholarship-search](http://www.petersons.com/college-search/scholarship-search)
- ❖ Scholarships.com—Over 3.7 million college scholarships and grants  
<https://www.scholarships.com/>
- ❖ The College Board--a non-profit organization and the publisher of the PSAT, SAT, AP, and other standardized tests. <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>
- ❖ Chegg—although this site provides more than just scholarships, you can browse more than 10,000 of them here. <http://www.chegg.com/scholarships>

- ❖ ScholarshipMonkey-- Provides student access to more than 1 million undergraduate, graduate, and professional scholarship awards worth over \$3 billion from more than 4,000 sources. <http://www.scholarshipmonkey.com/>
- ❖ Scholarships360-- <https://scholarships360.org/discover-scholarships/>
- ❖ Student Scholarship Search.Com <http://www.studentscholarshipsearch.com/>
- ❖ Cappex--search for colleges, scholarships, and more. [www.cappex.com](http://www.cappex.com)

