

COLLEGE READINESS PACKET



CRESCENT SCHOOL
COLLEGE OFFICE

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CRESCENT HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PLANNING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is a guide for college-bound students and their parents. Read it carefully and use it as a reference guide.

There are over 3,600 colleges and universities in the United States. They differ in size, cost and environment. There is a wide variety of specialty programs available to meet the needs of each individual student. The college selection process can seem complicated and confusing. It is important for students, parents, teachers and counselors to work together to complete this process.

The counseling staff is prepared to guide students and parents through the college selection and application procedure. The first step in the college selection process is to have a parent/student conference with your counselor to explore college placement options.

SAT/ACT

General Information:

Although colleges realize SAT or ACT scores do not tell much about you, they are still an important part of most college's admissions policies.

All students should take the SAT Reasoning Test during the spring of their junior year. Most students will repeat the SAT Reasoning Test during the fall of their senior year. The colleges designated on your SAT registration form will automatically receive your scores.

Check college requirements for SAT Subject Tests. Some schools require certain SAT Subject Tests.

Remember to register for the SAT Subject Tests separately from the SAT Reasoning Test. You **cannot** take both tests on the same day; however, you can take more than one SAT Subject Test on the same day.

It is the student's responsibility to check the website of each college or university to insure that they have met the testing requirements for admission.

Crescent High School **does not** send SAT or ACT scores to colleges.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS BY THE NUMBERS

Everything you read in newspapers and in magazines, see on TV or hear on the radio about college admissions would lead you to believe that it is almost impossible to get admitted to college unless you are super strong academically, have high test scores, have wealthy and/or famous parents or have more "game" than anyone else around. Not true. Here are some numbers:

- 3600** There are about 3600 two and four year colleges in the US.
- 1600** Approximately 1600 of these are two year colleges. Virtually all (with the exception of a literal handful) are open admissions. This means that they admit anyone who holds a high school diploma.
- 2000** That leaves about 2000 four year colleges. Roughly 300 to 400 of these are open admissions. When combined with two year colleges, anyone who graduates from high school has at least 2000 colleges willing to offer them admission. A few hundred more admit more than 95% of those who apply.
- 135** The general public tends to regard "selective" admissions to mean that a college admits fewer than 50% of those who apply. Colleges do not look at it that way. They call themselves selective as long as they do not admit **EVERYONE** who applies. Only about 135 colleges actually admit fewer than 50% of their applicants.
- 50** The 135 figure does not take into account **ACADEMIC** expectations. Just what percent of total applicants are admitted? If we look at colleges that admit fewer than 50% of their applicants **AND** who have freshman SAT averages of 1250 or higher, the number of colleges drops to 50.
- 24** The media tends to concentrate on looking at admissions to the "best-elite-toughest-choosiest" colleges in the country as measured by acceptance rates and the academic profiles of freshmen. This tends to narrow the scope of vision to colleges that admit fewer than 25% of those who apply and that report freshman SAT averages of 1250 or above. This leaves only about 24 colleges.

Given the large number of excellent colleges and universities that do not fall within these "elite" groups, selectivity alone is not an accurate measure of quality. The reality is that there are more and even better college options available to students now than at any other time in our history. Though ever more costly, from an admissions perspective, higher education is more accessible to a wider range of people than ever before.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

What do colleges consider in determining whether they will accept an applicant? Although few colleges would give exactly the same weight to all items in this list, most would agree that the following would be considered important in determining an applicant's fitness for college:

- **Academic Record:**
Most colleges consider your overall academic average to be the most important single indicator of how well you are likely to do in college.
- **Quality of Courses:**
Many colleges look more favorably upon a high average if it has been obtained while taking the more difficult, challenging courses than if it has been obtained by taking a great many of the so called "easy" courses. **It should be noted that many colleges use only the academic courses in re-computing your average for acceptance to their school.** For example, they are most interested in your English, history, science, math and language courses. Pay attention to the strength of your senior year course work. If you do not have solid course work, you are inviting extra scrutiny.
- **Entrance Examination Scores:**
Most colleges require students to take the SAT Reasoning Test, which measures one's ability to do college level work. Many colleges accept the ACT (American College Test) as an alternative to the SAT. Some colleges require you to take SAT Subject Tests. It is recommended that students for whom English is not a first language take the TOEFL exam. You will know what tests are required by the college by checking the appropriate section of the college's catalog or at their individual website.
- **Activity Record:**
While colleges are primarily interested in your academic record, they are also interested in leadership qualities, unusual interests, abilities and talents. Colleges would rather see a sustained interest in specific activities than a long list of activities which only indicates casual involvement.
- **Recommendations:**
Many colleges require recommendations from teachers who know you well enough to provide an accurate assessment of your attitude and abilities. Your counselor will be asked to write a recommendation, so be sure to make him/her aware of any information which should be included.

- **Essay:**
For most colleges, an essay is an important part of the admissions process. When evaluating students of comparable achievements, the essay can be the determining factor in the admissions process. Special attention ought to be given to uniqueness of context and to excellence of style.
- **Interview:**
Few colleges require applicants to come for a personal interview. Some colleges do encourage informal meetings and visits while others may schedule local alumni interviews.

The Student's Plight

It's Sunday.
 The application must be postmarked and in the
 mail tomorrow or the college won't accept it.
 I've finished my homework.
 I can't put it off any longer – it's due tomorrow!
 What do they want from
 me? What do I write?
 What do they want to hear?
 Why do I have to keep typing my home address and social security
 number? Is it true that only class rank and SAT scores matter?
 What about the yearbook, the newspaper, and the drama
 club? Will I look just like everyone else?
 How can I be different?
 Am I different?
 There must be one of me at every high school in the country.
 Mom and Dad want me to go to a good college.
 My older sister wants me to be happy.
 I don't know what I want.
 I just want to get in.
 I didn't get to see my guidance counselor about my essay topic.
 Which teachers should I give these recommendation forms
 to? What about soccer?
 Should I write the coach?
 I'll fill in my name and address first.
 Then I'll worry about the rest.

There is no surefire formula that will guarantee a good application, but you can help yourself by keeping the following in mind. Read through all the information required before filling in any information on the application. **Be aware of application deadlines.** You will increase your chances of producing a strong application if you allow yourself plenty of time. Write a rough draft of the application. Revise and rewrite. Make certain that your final copy is neat and clean. Make sure you have completed all portions to be filled out by the applicant. **Be certain to sign where indicated.** **Remember--**the application is your opportunity to make a statement to an admissions committee. Do not lose this opportunity.

You may apply to as many colleges as you wish, but **usually it is not necessary to submit more than eight or nine applications** (remember that colleges charge an application fee). Your final list of colleges should typically include one or two colleges which are “reach schools”, a few which are “realistic” (where you have a better than even chance), and a few which are “safe” (where admission is reasonably certain). Make sure that every college that is on your list is one you would be happy to attend.

Note the following procedures:

- Make a copy of the blank original application and use it as your first draft.
- Write your name and social security number on all pieces of paper, including your application check.
- Fill out all the paperwork in the Counseling Center when submitting your application.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Developing a list of colleges that is “right” for you is an involved process. The first step is self-assessment or evaluation of your educational values, interests and aspirations. You will use this assessment when you discuss schools with your counselor and when you write your college applications. The following questions may help you in your assessment:

Goals and Values:

- What kind of a student am I?
- What kind of a student would I like to become?
- What aspects of Crescent High School have I enjoyed the most?
- What parts of school do I like the least?
- How do I define success?

Academic:

- What are my favorite and least favorite courses?
- What do I choose to learn when I am on my own?
- Do my grades reflect my ability and potential?
- How well has Crescent High School prepared me for college?
- Are my SAT scores an accurate measure of my ability?
- What is the average number of hours I study each night?

Activities, Interests and Aspirations:

- What activities do I enjoy the most outside of the classroom?
- What activities do I plan to pursue in college?
- What do my parents expect of me?
- Who has influenced me the most?

Personality and Relationships:

- What adjectives do I use to describe myself?
- How would my best friend describe me?
- Which relationships are most important to me? Why?
- How free do I feel to make my own decisions?
- How do I feel about going to a college where the other students are quite different from me?
- How do I feel about going to a college very different from RHS?

GATHERING INFORMATION ON COLLEGES

The Counseling Center is a good place to start. It contains catalogs from many individual colleges and a wide variety of commercially published guide books. All college admissions offices have an e-mail address which can be accessed on the internet. You can request and/or download applications and brochures.

All colleges have created web pages which can be accessed through your home computer or with one of several computers in the high school. You may find it possible to download applications to your home computer. You can find website addresses in many of the college handbooks. You can try to find your college websites under: (http://www._____.edu) where you enter variations of the name of the college in the space provided. If you are unable to find the school that you are looking for, go to "Ecola's College Locator" (www.ecola.com/college). This site has direct links to roughly 4,000 school websites.

Many other excellent sources of college related information - including financial aid - may be found at:

www.allcoach.com	coaching and information source
www.campustours.com	virtual campus tours
www.collegeboard.com	pre-college testing and resources
www.collegenight.com	college bound services
www.collegequest.com	online college search
www.collegerecruiting.com	athletic recruiting
www.collegeview.com	college search plus pictures
www.c3apply.org	college search
www.ed.gov/index.jsp	government sponsored programs
www.edonline.com/cq/hbcu	college bound services
www.fastweb.com	online scholarship information
www.finaid.org	financial aid
www.greekpages.com	fraternity and sorority information
www.kaplan.com	college comparisons
www.nacac.com	college resources
www.petersons.com	college search
www.princetonreview.com	college search
www.studentshelpingstudents.com	student authored feedback
www.supercollege.com	college search

PLANNING TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

The following check list will help insure that you meet important deadlines and give yourself enough time to make the best possible choices in the college selection process.

JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

_____ Register and take the PSAT's.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

_____ Meet with your counselor about academic needs and PSAT results.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

_____ Attend the college information program for parents of junior students.

_____ Schedule a college conference with your counselor.

_____ Investigate summer opportunities.

MARCH/APRIL

_____ Attend meeting with counselor to discuss post high school plans.

_____ Register for May/June SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests and/or ACT Exams.

_____ Begin preliminary research of colleges using college guides, catalogs, handbooks and videotapes available in the Counseling Center and the library. Explore the use of college websites.

MAY/JUNE

- _____ Make appointments to visit colleges.
- _____ Contact college admissions offices and specific departments for information about interesting programs.
- _____ Submit short recommendation forms to three to five teachers. Forms are available in the Counseling Center.
- _____ Attend spring college fairs.

*Now that you are officially a senior, the timeline continues under the title “Senior Year”

SENIOR YEAR

JULY/AUGUST

- _____ Send for college applications of your choice except for SUNY, CUNY and Nassau Community Colleges which are available in the Counseling Center.
- _____ Review your three year high school transcript, which will be mailed to you at the end of August.
- _____ Student and parent are required to sign the Release Section of the Transcript Verification Form, indicating that the transcript is correct to mail to colleges.
- _____ Submit a transcript correction form, if needed, to the Counseling Center.
- _____ Register for the October SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests or ACT with Writing.

NOTE: SUBMIT EARLY DECISION APPLICATIONS BY MID-SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

- _____ Register for November SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests by the end of September.
- _____ Attend meetings with college representatives in the Counseling Center.
- _____ Prepare and/or review your activity record so it is ready to include with your college application.
- _____ Attend group meetings with your counselor, who will review application procedures.
- _____ Attend college conferences and, when possible, visit college campuses that interest you.
- _____ An optional senior college conference is available for students and parents. Call your counselor to schedule one.
- _____ Submit all college applications using the CAR (College Application Record) form. These forms are available from Mrs. Burns in the Counseling Center.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

- _____ Take senior year SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests or ACT with Writing.
- _____ Submit college applications. Check deadlines. Applications which must be processed by January 1st must be submitted in November.
- _____ Investigate scholarship and award opportunities. Information is

posted outside the Counseling Center and in Naviance.

_____ Complete forms to have test scores sent directly to colleges.

NOTE: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FORWARD YOUR SAT SCORES TO EACH COLLEGE. THE COUNSELING CENTER DOES NOT FORWARD ANY SCORES.

_____ AP scores **WILL NOT** be sent by the Counseling Center with your application. You have the responsibility of informing the colleges of your scores.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

_____ Keep track of college application deadlines.

_____ Review senior SAT scores and revise college applications if necessary.

_____ Complete and submit FAFSA by February 14th.

_____ Keep in touch with your counselor regarding the status of your college applications.

MARCH/APRIL

_____ Most colleges make decisions by mid-April.

MAY/JUNE

_____ Select and notify the college you plan to attend in the fall. Inform the other schools that you **WILL NOT** be attending and inform the Counseling Center of your plans.

_____ Prepare for graduation.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

There are several basic admissions plans. It is important that you carefully read the information supplied by the colleges when you begin the application process because there are differences among college programs.

- **Early Decision:**

Most colleges have adopted plans that permit students to apply early in the fall, usually by November 1st or November 15th. One of three actions will be taken. The student will be accepted, rejected or deferred to the regular applicant pool for later assessment. Most early decision applicants will be notified of the college's decision by December 15th.

If you are accepted to the college of your choice, **YOU AGREE TO WITHDRAW ALL OTHER APPLICATIONS AND ATTEND THAT COLLEGE.** This is a binding agreement. Financial Aid is estimated based on information you supply. You may apply to only one college using the early decision process. Obviously, you must be absolutely sure that you want to attend this college. You should only apply early decision if: **you are positive you want to attend and financial aid is not a consideration.**

- **Early Action:**

This plan is early notification. Most applications are due at the college by November 1st or November 15th with a reply date some time in late December to mid-January. Early action is not a binding agreement. You may continue to apply elsewhere and enroll elsewhere if you wish.

- **Regular Decision:**

This is the "usual" way of applying to college. You can apply to as many schools as you wish. Regular decision deadlines vary from school to school, however, college deadlines tend to fall on January 1st or January 15th for competitive colleges. If financial aid is a consideration in your college search, it is best to apply regular decision and then compare all the different financial aid packages you are awarded. The college usually notifies you of their decision on or around April 1st and you have until May 1st to reply. (In most cases, the sooner you say "yes" the better your housing assignment will be.)

- **Rolling Admissions:**

This means that your application will be evaluated as soon as it is complete and you will usually receive a decision within a month or two. Many state colleges utilize rolling admissions. Sooner is better for rolling admissions. In order to maximize your chances, applications for universities such as Penn State, Wisconsin, Maryland, California State schools and Michigan should be completed by **October 15th** or as early as possible.

TRANSCRIPT

Your transcript is the most important part of your application. It is the cornerstone. It is a picture of your academic accomplishments and progress through your years of high school. Keep in mind:

- Colleges like to see strong grades.
- Colleges like to see a positive grade trend that shows consistent improvement over the course of your high school career. (Negative trends can hurt you. Use junior and senior years to pull up sinking marks.)
- Colleges like to see solid grades in Honors or AP level work. (Getting a “C” in an “Honors” level class does not look good, even though the class is advanced. “Challenge yourself”. Do not “kill yourself”.)
- Junior and senior years are very important. They can “make or break you”. (Admissions counselors will deny good applicants who slack off in 11th or 12th grade. **DO NOT** be one of these students.)
- Work as hard as you can to ensure that you achieve the best marks possible.
- Colleges will use grades, including your first semester of senior year, to make decisions. (Early Decisions will be made on 9th, 10th, 11th and, possibly, the grades for the first quarter of senior year.) In order to ensure that you do not get a case of senioritis at the end of 12th grade, colleges receive your final transcript.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

All records from Crescent High School are considered confidential and may not be released to a student or his/her family. Even though you will not be writing your own recommendations, they are your responsibility. Know what forms the colleges require. Most colleges request that your counselor complete a recommendation form and a secondary school report in addition to an official transcript. Make certain that your high school Counseling Center has these forms at least **three** weeks before the application deadline.

A word of caution about letters of recommendation from outside sources that are unsolicited by the college - such as a letter from the college alumnus who works with your father but who has only met you twice. This type of recommendation will have no impact. Submit only letters written by those who have observed your performance in some area (athletics, drama, a summer job, etc.). **Avoid too many (more than three) recommendations.**

In addition to the counselor recommendation, you may be asked to submit teacher recommendations. Be aware of these requirements and pick teachers who know you best and will take the time to write a meaningful assessment of your performance. You may want to schedule a fifteen minute conference with them to make certain that they are well informed about you.

When you request a teacher to write a college recommendation for you, you must submit the request through Naviance. Please list all of the colleges you are applying to.

PLEASE NOTE: If the teacher is going to be sending your recommendation through Naviance, there is no need to provide stamped envelopes addressed to each college.

- **Remember--**you need to give your teachers at least three weeks to write your recommendations. Do not expect them to write a letter for you over the weekend. Teachers are busy people. Some teachers are extremely involved at college application time. Ask early, as soon as you know who you want to write the letters.
- **It is a good idea to send teachers a thank you note.**

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Most applications have a space for listing what you do outside the classroom. There are a few abiding principles when communicating this information:

- Make sure that the reader can easily understand the nature of what you may be involved in. Acronyms (PAC, DECA etc.) are not useful nor are organizations whose name does not accurately describe what the organization does (Kids for Kids, for example).
- Colleges want to know about those activities that have a length and breadth of involvement and those that engage you and that you have a passion for. Students should list those first and describe their extent of involvement.
- There is not a check list of activities that are a must for each application. It is not necessary to make sure you play a sport, play a musical instrument, do community service and belong to a world languages club.
- Creating or joining clubs or activities just to put on a college resume is transparent. Students should do what they truly enjoy and feel strongly about. Being president of the Latin Club can mean leading two or three meetings a year or intense leadership in Latin competitions and programs. Make sure the college is aware of the difference. One shot activities (Special Olympics, volunteering or participating in a walk or run to raise money) carry much less weight than long term commitments.
- Employment, athletics or long-term volunteer work says a lot about a student's ability to commit and follow through. These characteristics are attractive to colleges.
- Artistic students should demonstrate their talents through photos of artwork, videos of dance or drama performances or examples of poetry and prose. For students seeking a Bachelor of Fine Arts, these requirements are spelled out in detail in the admissions material. At BA programs, the admissions office will frequently send these items to the art department for evaluation.
- Athletes that plan on playing in college fall into two categories: those who have the ability to do so and those who do not. For those who plan on playing in college, see the chapter on college athletics. For others, it is still a demonstration of dedication and perseverance.
- Do not be afraid to attach a resume if necessary, but be sure to complete the activity section of the application.
- Being a "well-rounded student" is not a huge plus to most colleges. It is an expectation. The more preferable situation is when a student is well rounded yet also has one or two strong and intense passions.
- It is always a plus to have experience in a stated career goal. Doing such things as scientific research, volunteering at a hospital, doing an internship at an accounting firm or volunteering with school children adds to your credibility.
- Any accomplishment, from playing bridge or chess to competing in horse shows or baking, is more impressive if the student receives recognition. The higher the recognition - local, state, national, or international - the more impressive.

- Extracurricular activities should corroborate strengths, talents and interests seen in other parts of the application. If teachers and counselors highly praise a student's writing and the student states they want to major in creative writing in college, it is best to be able to show writing done outside of classroom assignments.
- It is obvious when activities are done to make one appear a better college candidate. That student who lives on a Native American reservation building houses the summer before senior year will not do much to impress a college admissions officer. If that same student was a camp counselor for the past two summers and really enjoyed it, it would be more impressive for that student to continue to be a camp counselor.
- Students should do what they enjoy, have talent in and have had a long-term commitment to. This **DOES NOT** mean that parents should start pushing their children to find that passion in the seventh grade and mold every aspect of it to make sure it appears impressive. It does mean that parents should nurture and support what a child truly enjoys or wants to try.

For a sample of the Extracurricular Profile see pages 52-53

COLLEGE ESSAY

The essays on your college application are very important items. Through these essays, you have the opportunity to convey to the admissions personnel the things that are most important to you. Make sure that your essays contain information that is of some value. The best essays are not only well written, they present what are often ordinary events from an unusual perspective.

Describe thoughts, events or personal characteristics that you have not communicated elsewhere in the application. Be honest and accurate. If you feel that the questions do not give you an opportunity to reveal and express important information, include an additional sheet.

What makes a good impression? Enthusiasm, intelligence, talent, leadership, maturity, writing ability, creativity, and perseverance are all high on the list, but no one expects to find them all wrapped up in one person. What colleges want is honest insight. A good essay conveys the writer as a real and valuable person worth knowing. It expresses who you are and what you have accomplished and fills in the gaps in the statistics, explaining what four years of facts will not show. Be careful to avoid essays that repeat your activity resume.

Sample Questions:

All college applications ask the same basic questions. Who are you and what makes you different from other qualified applicants we must consider? Most schools, however, have their own way of asking for this information. Below are some essay topics from the common application.

- Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you.
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
- Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you and describe that influence.

In addition, below you will find some of the more creative wordings used by colleges and universities in the past.

- If you were to describe yourself by a quotation, what would that quotation be? (Dartmouth)
- What is the best advice you ever received? Why? Did you follow it? (University of Pennsylvania)
- Write a letter to your new college roommate introducing yourself and describing your background. (Carleton)

- Ask and answer the one important question that you wish we had asked. (Carleton)
- Please describe your reaction to the quotation, “He does not possess wealth, it possesses him”. (William and Mary)
- Given the authority to establish a holiday, what would you choose to commemorate? (Stanford)
- Suppose you had the opportunity to spend a day with anyone. With whom would it be and how would you spend your time? (Stanford)
- Drawing upon some personal experience, write a fable. (Stanford)
- Imagine the year is 1881. You may expect to live another 35 years. What person would you most want to know well during that time? For what reasons? (Swarthmore)
- Identify a person who has had a significant influence on you and describe that influence. (Wesleyan)
- Share with us what other students would learn from you both inside and outside the classroom. (Wesleyan)
- You have just completed your 300-page autobiography. Please submit page 217. (The University of Pennsylvania)
- If you could introduce one new idea or material thing to a primitive culture, what would it be? (College of the Atlantic)

PRE-WRITING SUGGESTIONS:

Prepare an inventory of yourself before you write.

Make an outline of your achievements. Make a list of your hobbies, jobs, community service - anything that may be positive about you.

Consult with your counselor.

Please check the College Office and the library for material which can provide helpful hints on how to write a good admissions essay.

Consider some of the following tips on how to write your essay:

- Never accept your first draft as final. Write a rough draft, put it away for a while and then re-read it objectively. Ask yourself if you have been repetitive, boring, disorganized. Have you said all the things you wanted to say? Have you included too many trivial items?
- Seek the opinions of others. Show it to an adult whose opinion you respect (counselor, teachers and parents).

- Make the essay unique and interesting. You are competing with many other applicants. Try to make your essay stand out. Give the admissions staff a reason to remember you and select you over other candidates.
- Provide quality, not quantity. Merely listing twenty extracurricular activities is ineffective. Rather, describe in detail a meaningful leadership role you have held in one of them.
- Follow directions carefully. You may feel the application does not provide enough space for all you have to say. **Remember**--the designers of the question are probably testing your ability to organize and write concisely.
- Know your subject. Make sure you know enough about your topic to write a credible essay. Make sure you stay focused on the topic.
- Pay attention to form. Be neat.

ESSAY GUIDELINES:

Do....Plan ahead

----- and leave time to write and rewrite your essays - with time in between. This will allow for fresh reviews and revisions of the original work.

Do....Tell the truth

----- about yourself.

Do....Tie yourself to the college

----- by expressing why you are interested in attending and what the institution can do for you. Be specific. Go beyond “XYZ College will best allow me to realize my academic potential”.

Do....Read the directions carefully

----- and follow them to the letter. If the essay is supposed to be 500 words or less, do not submit 1000 words.

Do....Consider the unique features of the institution

----- For example, a liberal arts college will be impressed with the variety of academic and personal interests you might have, while an art institute will be most interested in your creative abilities.

Do....Be positive and upbeat

----- and avoid the negatives like “I am applying to your school because I will not be required to take physical education and a foreign language”.

Do....Emphasize

----- what you have learned. Provide more than a narration when recounting an experience.

Do....Write about something you know

----- something only you could write. (Make copies of everything, just in case.)

Don't....Force it

----- to be too funny, too sad, too cute, too silly. (“I enjoy playing the piano and guitar but not simultaneously”.)

Don't....Be redundant

----- Essays should not be a rehash of information already provided on other parts of the application or on your high school transcript.

Don't....Let modesty cover up your greatest assets

----- (and achievements).

Don't....Worry about trick questions

----- your readers are genuinely interested in your answers.

Don't....Be afraid to confess your anxieties

----- or indecisiveness. Admissions officers are people who enjoy helping people and can be quite moved by the knowledge that you need them.

Don't....Have a parent, sibling, friend or “advisor”

----- write your essay. Your essay should be your unique voice. It is always a good idea to have someone review it for corrections.

COLLEGE VISIT

The best way for you to learn about the educational program, faculty, facilities, atmosphere and spirit of a college is to visit the campus, particularly when the college is in session. **(If you visit a college during a school day, please provide documentation of the visit to the attendance office.)**

College visits enable you to:

- learn what college admissions officials expect from a candidate
- observe the academic atmosphere - - sit in on classes
- evaluate the environment of the school
- observe and talk with students who are attending and with whom you would associate

When you visit the college, observe:

- size of classes
- library facilities - - availability of computers, hours of operation
- the department you are likely to select as a major
- laboratory facilities
- composition of the student body
- dormitories and study facilities - - location, size, policies
- dining facility - - quality of food
- campus setting - - beauty, orderliness and cleanliness
- infirmary and health services
- religious facilities
- facilities for leisure time - - cultural programs, athletics and social life
- the college students - - Do they appear to be happy, lively, friendly?
- the attitude of the faculty toward students
- the students - - Are they friendly and courteous toward visitors? Are they serious and businesslike toward their work?

QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGES:

What should I ask about admissions?

- What information about me is evaluated for admission? What is most important/least important?
- Do I need to take a college entrance exam before admission? Which one?
- What if I do not have a good high school average? Are there alternative admissions programs?

- Is credit given for advanced placement courses?
- When should I apply?
- How will I know if additional information (letters of recommendation, biography) is required?
- Should I make a visit to the campus? When?
- Who makes the decision on my application?
- When will I know if I have been accepted?
- What do I do if I am not accepted?

What should I ask about academic life?

- Do I have to choose a major right away?
- What about the transfer process from a two year to a four year college?
- Are interdisciplinary majors available?
- Can I design my own program?
- What kind of academic advisement is available?
- What are the campus academic facilities - - library, labs?
- Can I participate in a cooperative study/work program in my field?
- Is ROTC available?
- Can I complete a bachelor's degree in less than four years?
- Will I have evening classes?
- Is remedial help available?
- What opportunities are available for study abroad?
- Are visiting student programs encouraged?
- Is special assistance available for handicapped students?

POSSIBLE TOUR GUIDE QUESTIONS:

- What do you like best/worst about being a student here?
- How large are your classes?
- Who teaches you? Can you get help from professors?
- Where do you study?
- Do students talk much about grades?
- Have you ever been in a faculty home?
- Do you talk much about national politics and issues? Are students politically active?
- Where can I get a copy of the campus newspaper?
- Where do most students hang out?
- When do you declare a major? What are the most popular majors?
- Tell me about the housing. Are some dorms better than others? Do many students live off campus? Why?
- Do students study hard? What is the attitude towards working hard?
- What is the biggest issue in local campus politics?

- What impact do fraternities and sororities have? Athletics?
- What are weekends like?
- Are the arts supported here?
- Where do students come from? Is this a diverse community?
- Why did you choose this school? Where else did you apply?
- What kinds of kids do you think are happiest here? Which ones are least happy?

For a sample of the College Visit Worksheet see page 54

COLLEGE INTERVIEW

Many colleges suggest that applicants become involved in a personal interview. Other colleges require a personal interview and use the interviewer's evaluation of the candidate as a critical part of the application process. Interviews can be categorized in a number of ways depending upon their participants and purposes.

The Group Information Session:

This is usually held on campus and used primarily as a means to disseminate information about the college and give applicants a chance to ask questions.

The Individual Interview:

The candidate goes "one-on-one" with an admissions officer and may or may not receive a rating from the interviewer. In some cases, a student from the college may sit in on the interview session.

The Alumni Interview:

Sometimes graduates from the college will interview the candidates. The interview may take place in the interviewer's home, in the candidate's home, or at the high school. The purpose of this interview may be to dispense information or to rate the candidate.

High School Interview:

College and university representatives visit high schools each year. Students are invited to chat with the representative in the Counseling Center. These "interviews" are rarely intended to be more than a chance to ask questions. Occasionally, students have made very positive impressions on the college representative in these sessions and their candidacies have been greatly enhanced.

In addition to the formal and informal setups described above, students may also come into contact with college representatives at college nights and at college fairs.

Here are some tips that have proven useful to candidates through the years. You may want to review them before you are involved in an interview.

- Be on time, and make sure to get the interviewer's name. **(It is a good idea to write a thank you note a day or so after your interview.)**
- Do not be afraid of the person interviewing you. He is not "out to get you".
- Do not fight with the interviewer. He may challenge a response you provide, but it is usually a test of your flexibility and your capacity to think on your feet. Try to see it this way and respond accordingly.
- Dress for success. It is more likely that your interviewer will be "dressed for business". Show, through your own grooming and dress, that the interview is important to you. **Dress smart.**

- Be positive. For example, rather than whining about your science teacher’s cloudy explanation, discuss how the situation provided you with a chance for independent study.
- Show that you are knowledgeable about the college and indicate that you are applying for appropriate reasons. Be prepared to ask intelligent questions.
- Stress all of your strengths and admit to some of your weaknesses. If the interviewer asks why your SAT scores are so low, point to the good job you have been able to do on a daily basis in the classroom and in your outside activities.
- Be honest. If your career plans are uncertain, say so. It is “okay” to be undecided.

MAXIMIZING AN INTERVIEW:

- Treat every interview as if it is your first choice school.
- Be prepared to intelligently answer the question “tell me about yourself”.
- Read parts of the catalog thoroughly ahead of time.
- **Most admissions counselors will ask if you have any questions.** This is perhaps the **most important part** of the interview because the questions you ask demonstrate how interested you are and your level of maturity and confidence.

Carefully prepare a list of questions following these suggestions:

- Be aware of current national, state, and local affairs.
- Do not be afraid to mention (and try to find a way to do it) your strengths both academic and non-academic.
- Choose ahead of time at least one subject or interest that you know well and try to bring it up. Be prepared to discuss it at length.

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Why do you want to go to college?
- Why do you want to attend this college?
- Tell me about yourself? Who are you? Describe yourself?
- How would your friends describe you?
- How are you different from other students applying here? We have many qualified applicants. Why should we admit you? Why do you think you are a good match for this college?
- What political issue (local or national) concerns you most? Why?
- How do you like Crescent High School? What has been the most positive experience you have had? The most negative?
- If you could re-do high school, what would you do differently?
- What books or authors have made a lasting impression on your way of thinking?

- If you could be any fictional character, who would you be and why?
- If you could be one historical figure, who would it be and why?
- What is your role in the school community? What would your teachers say about you as a person?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- What are you looking for in a college?
- What are some of your goals (personal and career) for the future?
- Tell me about a particular class or assignment in which you found yourself most stimulated intellectually?
- What is your reason for participating in athletics (or student government or the newspaper, etc.)? What are the satisfactions?
- What has been your favorite subject in high school? Why?
- What might you study in college?
- What events would you deem critical to your life thus far?
- Who has influenced you the most?
- How have you spent your summers?
- How do you spend your free time?
- Do you have any questions? **(It is crucial that you have some questions for the interviewer.)** This question will be asked in **EVERY** interview.

Other advice:

- arrive on time
- dress neatly
- shake hands firmly
- make eye contact
- be yourself
- watch your language, avoid slang
- do not chew gum
- always write a thank you note

For a sample of the Thank You Note see page 55

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

There is one major thing for learning disabled students to take into consideration when looking at post-secondary options. **The protections, accommodations and services required by secondary schools will not necessarily be available after high school.** Students in the public school system in America are under the protection of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEIA) which mandates that all children will receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). No matter how costly or extensive, children have the right to have their educational needs met in the least restrictive atmosphere possible. Students in public school, if necessary, may have one-to-one aides or be sent out-of-district to extremely expensive specialized schools.

Students with disabilities can be protected through two different laws: IDEIA and Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). IDEIA generally covers students with more severe disabilities. ADA covers students with impairment of one or more life functions. The major difference between these two levels of protection is that the IDEIA provides for services and accommodations, whereas Section 504 provides for just accommodations. Students under IDEIA have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) worked out annually by the Committee on Special Education. The needs of the student identified by the IEP must be met no matter the cost or inconvenience. Schools usually have varying special education programs and staff specifically designated to meet the needs of students (in-class support, resource room, inclusion, etc.) classified under IDEIA. Most students in IDEIA have some educational modification to meet their needs.

Students protected under a 504 plan generally do not have educational modifications. Their schedule is the same as it would be without the 504 plan, but they are allowed to have modifications to meet their needs within the classroom. A student with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) may be given extra time for tests or a seat in the front of the classroom. A student with severe asthma may be excused from the school's attendance policy. A major difference between IDEIA and 504 is cost and finances. IDEIA mandates that the school provide services no matter what the cost. Section 504 only allows for modifications, not costly services.

IDEIA ends at high school. There are colleges that provide for services for learning disabled students, but the parents generally pay for those costs. Colleges are not required to meet the needs of all students who apply, they only need to provide "**reasonable accommodations**" to students they knowingly admit with learning or other disabilities. The key here is "knowingly". If a student self-discloses a disability in the pre-admissions process and the college admits that student, the college must meet the reasonable accommodations of the student. Reasonable, in this case, means the accommodations that will not alter the educational mission of the institution.

It is up to the student whether to self-disclose a disability. Students should understand that disclosing a disability may cause them to be denied to a college. This may seem to be discrimination. According to the law, colleges are not required to admit students whose needs they cannot meet, particularly if the costs of meeting those needs would create an undue hardship on the college or the services provided that student would not be congruent with the mission of the college. A college may require a foreign language for graduation and feel that was an essential part of its educational mission. If a student documented, prior to being admitted, that they had a disability that prevented them from completing a foreign language, that student could be denied. One college's decision to deny a hearing impaired student was upheld by the courts. The college argued successfully that the cost of installing both visual and auditory fire alarms in every building on campus (they only had auditory alarms in place) would be prohibitively expensive and would take significant funds away from the educational needs of the other students on campus.

If a student self-discloses a disability and is admitted, the college is required to provide reasonable accommodations to that student. However, the college may charge the parents extra for any additional services that may be required. If they do not self-disclose, they may still be provided accommodations and services by the college, but the college is under no obligation to do so.

This describes the legal aspects of college admissions for disabled students. The process can be much more complex than understanding these issues. Perhaps most difficult to ascertain is the difference between what colleges say they provide and what they actually provide. Some colleges that advertise that they have services for learning disabled students provide them reluctantly, with great inconvenience or at a high extra cost, and some colleges that do not advertise services for LD students actually provide all the services and accommodations willingly on an informal basis. A recent article in the New York Times stated that a well known university was now requiring students to get new testing and provide new documentation annually to the college in order to continue to receive accommodations. This is a very expensive and onerous requirement that gave many learning disabled students the impression that accommodations were being provided quite reluctantly.

The K and W Guide to Colleges for Learning Disabled Students by Mary Beth Kravets and Imy Wax is perhaps the best informational guide on the subject. It tells students whether colleges accommodate disabilities, whether they have special staff dedicated to providing support services for LD students and what documentation may be required in the pre-admissions process. Some colleges admit students through the regular admissions office while others have a special staff dedicated to all LD student admissions.

Nothing compares to visiting a college and meeting with the professors, LD staff, admissions officers and students. View the facilities and ask about the specific services provided for students. Talk to professors and ask them about their willingness to meet

the needs of LD students. Ask to meet with students who are presently getting services at the college. Inquire about how difficult or fair the admissions process was, what services are actually provided and how easy it is to get them. Are professors willing to accommodate needs and is tutoring provided and at what cost, etc.? Services that are provided which students feel are inconsistent, frequently unavailable and extremely costly or provided reluctantly are sometimes worse than no services at all.

A major issue for students who have disabilities is receiving accommodations for standardized testing (ACT or SAT). Accommodations may include a reader, a word processor or large block testing materials. The most frequent accommodation is extended time for testing. This is perceived by many parents as an “edge” in college admissions and some have attempted to get extra time for students who “don’t test well” who may not have a documented disability.

Students with disabilities and their parents have to be active in the college search process. They have to consider, at the beginning of the process, what services and accommodations are absolutely necessary, decide whether it is best to self-disclose a disability in the process and research which schools will be best able to meet the students needs. It is essential to begin the process of applying for extended time at least six months prior to the first PSAT the student takes. Each course of action frequently has some degree of risk associated with it. It is essential to be aware of those risks and be prepared to accept them should they come about.

There are three types of college support programs: structured, coordinated and basic service programs. Structured programs are comprehensive in nature and provide students with significant amounts of support. Students are often required to participate in specific components of the program. Schools may charge a program participation fee. Some may also require a separate admissions process. Services may include:

- staff trained in learning disabilities
- special orientation programs
- curriculum modifications
- assistance with advocacy
- academic monitoring and counseling

Colleges with structured programs include Curry College, American University, University of Arizona, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Hofstra University, Marist College, University of Vermont and Barry University. In some cases, admission to the learning disabled program may override a denial from the college.

Coordinated programs provide students with moderate levels of support. Such programs often have a learning disabilities specialist (at least part-time) who assists students in coordinating academic adjustments. Services may include:

- learning strategies instruction
- counseling
- tutoring
- assistance with advocacy

Basic service programs provide the minimum amount of support necessary in order to comply with the law. Any colleges that receive federal funds (even in accepting student loan payments) must provide basic services.

Structured programs work best for students who need close monitoring and high levels of support. Coordinated programs work best for students who want to be mainstreamed but know they will need support. Basic service programs work best for highly motivated and independent students.

Some services available to students may include:

- Adaptive Technology Lab
- extended time on tests and quizzes
- exams administered in a distraction free room
- alternative testing formats (such as oral exams)
- early registration and reduced course load
- readers
- books on tape and enlarged handouts
- use of a tape recorder to record lectures
- talking calculators
- spell checkers
- note taking services
- Advocacy Seminars
- learning disability support group

College Counseling Check List for Students with Special Needs¹

Admissions:

- Are admissions criteria for students with special needs the same as for other students?
- Are there any special assessments required?
- Is diagnostic testing available?
- Is there a dedicated summer orientation for students with special needs?
- Is documentation required for demonstrating special needs?

Academic supports:

- Is the process for accessing special needs clear and easy to follow?
- Is there a fee for supports?
- Is tutoring available?
- Is remediation in basic skills available?
- Are study skills courses available?

Auxiliary aids - Does the school provide:

- Calculators, laptop computers, personal desktop computers, scan-and-read programs, screen enlarging programs, screen readers, speech recognition programs, spelling\grammar assistants

Auxiliary services - Does the school provide:

- Advocates, alternate exam arrangements, low cost duplicating, mentors, note-takers, priority registration, readers, scribes?

Student's supports - Does the school provide:

- career counseling
- career placement
- internship programs
- individual counseling
- small group counseling
- student organizations for special-needs students

¹ College Counseling Sourcebook, 2nd Edition, 2005, The College Board

ATHLETICS AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

There is perhaps nothing that can have a greater effect on college admissions than having the ability to play college athletics. Michelle Hernandez, in A is for Admissions, took some of the veil off the connection between athletics and admissions by giving the formula for the Academic Index, a formula used by the Ivy League, to determine minimum academic expectations for athletes. Students in the Ivy League need to have a minimum AI in order for the admissions office to consider an athlete for admissions.

In two seminal books on athletics and college admissions, The Game of Life and The Name of the Game, William T. Bowen studied the effects of athletics on college admissions and came to the following conclusions:

- At selective liberal arts colleges, one third of the men and one fifth of the women were recruited athletes. At the Ivies, one quarter of the men and 15 % of the women were recruits.
- At the New England Small Athletic Conference, 43% of male students and 32% of female students were athletes. Of this number, 24% of males and 17 % of females were recruited. This was a much higher percentages than at scholarship schools.
- There has been a dramatic rise in the number of women being recruited for athletics over the last 20 years.
- Recruited athletes had a substantial advantage in admissions, much greater than other targeted groups (legacies, under-represented minorities, etc.).
- Recruited athletes at these schools have a 48% greater chance of being admitted. Minority students and legacies have a range of 18% to 24%.
- This advantage is much greater now than in 1989 which was much greater than in 1976, the years of these studies. This is most pronounced in the Ivy League where students were 4 times more likely to be admitted.
- Athletes had much lower SAT scores than their classmates (most pronounced in football, basketball and hockey) with average scores more than 100 points less than the student body at large.
- Recruitment of athletes had no marked effect on the socioeconomic composition or the racial diversity of the schools.
- Despite lower SAT's, the graduation rate of athletes in highly selective schools was high and comparable to non-athletes.
- College grades and rank-in-class was low for athletes and has deteriorated over time. In 1989, only 16% finished in the top third and 58% were in the bottom third. In the Ivy League, 81% of recruited athletes were in the bottom third of the class. This was not related to the time demands of the sport.
- Other groups with high time commitments (such as musicians) did not demonstrate this underperformance. Nor did legacies. Under-represented minorities have shown a steady increase in performance over the years while athletes' performance has declined.

- Male athletes were most likely to go into the social sciences and earn an advanced degree. They are more likely to go into business and finance and less likely to become scientists, engineers, academics, lawyers or doctors.
- Male athletes consistently earned more money than their classmates!
- In 1976, women athletes were more likely than classmates to be doctors and lawyers and enjoyed a sizable earnings advantage over their classmates. In 1989, they were no more likely to earn advanced degrees and did not enjoy any earnings advantage.

Conclusions: Athletics play a major role in admissions at all colleges. It has the greatest effect at the most selective colleges. In addition, athletes significantly affect the social and academic lives of these institutions.

A Few Important Items for Athletes to Take into Consideration:

You must hope for the best, but plan for the worst. At the best, athletics can open up many doors that would not be open to non-athletes and, even in rare instances, lead to an athletic scholarship. Yet there are two great pitfalls to consider. One is that, despite continuing encouragement from the coach, an offer of admissions never comes. Coaches frequently are recruiting many more students than they can get through admissions, assuming that many recruits will choose to attend elsewhere. Not until the coach has a definitive answer on who will apply, who will attend if admitted and who is going to be admitted will he stop recruiting student-athletes.

There are a number of things that have an impact on the coach's recruiting practices. What is the number of spots that the admissions office will allocate for the team? What are the minimum qualifications for the athletes? What openings does the coach have? All student athletes should go to the website for the team and look at the composition and performance of the previous year's team. How many seniors are graduating in your position or event? How many underclassmen play (or run, swim, etc.) where you do? Coaches need only so many 126 pound wrestlers, quarterbacks, defensive linemen or goalies. Some coaches will take risks in admissions, hoping that they can get a free pass by not identifying a student as an admissions recruit, believing that the student will get by admissions without the coach's help. The loser here can often be the student athlete who would have been a sure bet with the coach's help who ends up not being admitted at all.

High school athletes often misinterpret the level of interest of a coach. If a student writes a coach and gets a letter of interest from the coach in return, this is not a sign that the student is being recruited. This is usually simply a courtesy. Being recruited means at least two contacts from the coach. It is pretty easy to ascertain the level of the coach's interest. If the coach is not contacting you, he does not have an interest in you. If the coach is calling and writing regularly and suddenly stops contacting you, it generally means that he has gotten the athletes he needs and is not interested in you anymore.

You have to realize that, except at the very highest levels where almost all the top recruits are known to the coaches, few coaches are familiar with student athletes who are interested in playing for them. Most coaches do not have the ability to adequately research each athlete who shows interest and it puts the onus on the student to get themselves known and recognized.

There is one thing that many high school students do not realize but many college athletes learn the hard way. A great recruiter does not make a great coach. As a matter of fact, just the opposite is true. Some coaches seem to have intense interest in every aspect of the student athlete's life. They call and e-mail regularly, showing an interest in how the prospect is doing athletically and academically. Once the student begins playing sports, the coach seems to lose interest in the student's well being. He starts pressuring the athlete to play injured and sacrifice all for the team.

There is one obvious step that many prospective athletes never do. Ask the present team members what is it like to play on the team and play for this coach? Is it fun? Does the coach care about them? Does the coach make athletes play with injuries?

Athletic Time Line

Fall -- Junior Year

- Keep up your grades. This is important throughout junior year.
- Step up your off season conditioning.
- Select your target colleges. Start with about 20 colleges.
 - College parameters are variable and non-variable.
 - variable - include size of student population, geographical location, costs, majors
 - non-variable - include SAT scores, GPA, playing ability (your coaches can define this), athlete's size and strength
 - If you have no idea where to start, pick one or two colleges and, if you fit their academic profile, check their website to see who they play against - their competitors may have similar profiles that you fit as well.
- Cross reference your target 20 colleges against the list of Division 1 (D1), Division 2 (D2), and Division 3 (D3) schools to see how many schools in your original 20 have teams with your sport.
- Play multiple sports. College coaches feel that athletes who play multiple sports show athleticism and commitment to athletics.

Winter -- Junior Year

- In January, start planning to order game tapes (in sports where applicable) which can be expensive.
 - Colleges normally want full game tapes (where applicable). Frequently coaches will only consider you for the team if they can see your complete game (offensive, defensive, degree of hustle, reaction after making a

mistake). Coaches are looking for a complete player who hustles throughout, does not play out of control and who has good sportsmanship and teamwork.

- You may also want to consider having your own tape made. Professional tapes can be pricey. To cut costs, consider sharing the expense with a teammate. Check to see if you could hire a TV production student or a competent non-professional to film the games.
- Some coaches who have seen you play the previous season or in a summer camp may not require a tape.
- Talk to the coaches about good recruiting camps to attend.
- Keep up your grades.
- Start to shorten your list of target colleges to 10 schools.
 - Try to visit as many schools as possible to see which ones you feel most comfortable at.
 - Have a serious talk with parents about any financial constraints (private vs. state university costs, etc.). Many sports scholarships are not necessarily as large or as available as scholarships for other sports, e.g. football.
 - Check to see the makeup of current teams. How many seniors are on the team and will be leaving?

Spring -- Junior Year

- Keep up your grades.
- Send letters of interest to coaches. Include vital information. For sports like swimming and track, this is mostly statistical information, such as events competed in and personal bests in those event. In team sports, you should include position played, any awards or honors, playing time on varsity, etc. For certain sports, such as football, the coach will want to know your speed and size.
- You may want to have a separate athletic resume with the above information sent with your letter of interest. Provide information on how to contact your present coach, including phone numbers (ask your coach how it would be best for a college coach to contact him), e-mail address and mailing address.
- Have 10-15 copies of game tapes (where applicable) made. Be sure to label them on the outside with your name, number and color of jersey.

End of Junior Year

- **Apply online for the NCAA Clearinghouse at ncaaclearinghouse.com.** The fee is currently \$65. Normally you can not go on visits until you are cleared with the NCAA if you are trying to be recruited as an athlete. They tend to be slow and you usually can not play Division 1 in college without this clearance.
- E-mail coaches from your list of schools before you go to any summer camps. Tell them which camp you will be attending and that you hope you will get a chance to meet them there.

- Narrow your list to 2 to 3 colleges that you want your high school coach's help in contacting. Talk to him about your chances of getting in and whether the schools are good fits for you.
- After July 1st, colleges can talk to you directly and try to recruit you. Letters of interest are nice to receive, but, unless they are calling you, you are not a top recruit for them.
- Start sending out copies of your game tapes to your top 10+ choices. After sending the tapes, send an unofficial transcript of your grades (get this from the Counseling Center) and your SAT scores.
- Plan on spending a weekend at each school in which you are truly interested, whether or not you are invited by a coach (check out the social scene, academic support and other factors of importance to you).

Fall -- Senior Year

- Before applying early decision:
 - Have your high school coach speak to the prospective college coach.
 - Ask your counselor to check with the college admissions office and make sure that the story from the admissions office matches the story from the college coach.
 - Understand that, while applying early decision allows you to get notification from the college well in advance of the usual notification date, acceptance from that college is binding. If you are accepted, you must withdraw all other pending applications.
 - Prior to applying early decision, you may want to have a "likely letter" in hand (if the school issues them). Likely letters are only issued to athletes the colleges are very serious about. Applying early decision should be considered **only** if you are being heavily recruited and directed to do so by the college coach.
 - Be sure you have asked the college coach any and all questions you have prior to applying early decision.
- Give your high school coach:
 - Stamped, addressed envelopes to send a written evaluation to the college coach.
 - Names, addresses, phone numbers (school, home, cell) and e-mail addresses of your top college choices.
- Follow up with the college coaches to whom you sent tapes and/or resumes. Many times they have no office staff and may not look at your tape unless you remind them - use e-mail and telephone calls.
- Give the college coach the name, address, phone numbers (school, home, cell) and e-mail address of your high school coach.
- Ask the college coach where you fit on the recruiting list. Understand that if a coach wants you, he can not admit you, only the admissions office can.
- Once you have narrowed your choices, court the coach.
 - Convince the coach that he wants you through letters, e-mails, etc. Try to go for a practice or attend a game.

- See if you like the other athletes on the team and if they like you.
- After a visit, be sure to send a follow up thank you e-mail or letter.
- If you are fortunate enough to have been recruited and offered a scholarship, there are certain specific procedures to be followed which are covered on the National Letter of Intent website, www.national-letter.org.
- Pay attention to the initial and final signing dates. They vary from sport to sport and many times include a fall date and a spring date.

FINANCIAL AID

There is a staggering amount of federal, state, institutional and local financial aid available every year. The fact is that most of the students who apply for aid and who need it do receive all or part of what they need to attend their first choice college. The likelihood of receiving aid becomes greater as the cost of the college gets higher. The most expensive schools often have the most aid to give. During the application process, it is good common sense to pick colleges with a range of costs, including some that are within your reach financially. You should never eliminate the college you really want to attend on grounds of cost alone.

Another point to keep in mind is that the admissions decision and the financial aid decision are made separately and independently of one another, usually in different offices on campus. The admissions decision comes first and, in most cases, it makes no difference whether or not you are a candidate for financial aid. It is only after you are admitted that the financial aid staff will review your aid application and make its own aid decision.

The kind of financial aid we are discussing here is the specified amount of money that is offered to a student to help handle educational expenses. Most financial aid is given because the student has a mathematically determined need for it and the amount of that aid is limited to the student's calculated need. Simply stated, a student's need is determined as the difference between the cost of attending the school and the family's resources: $\text{Cost} - \text{Resources} = \text{Need}$.

Family resources are determined as:

- the amount the student's parents can pay from their income and assets
- the amount the student can contribute from earnings, plus savings account(s)
- any amount that is being contributed as a non-repayable gift

The student and parents are responsible for paying what they can. Financial aid is intended to supplement such efforts, not substitute for them.

THE FEDERAL AID PIE:

When it comes to federal financial aid, **all students are eligible** to get a piece of the aid pie. However, you must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) **as soon as possible after January 1st**. Here is a brief listing of the current federal funding programs for undergraduates.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE:

- Grants and Scholarships - Money you do not have to pay back. Available from many sources. Check with your high school, local library or the college you plan to attend.
- Work Study - Money earned from work used to help pay for educational expenses.
- Loans - Money borrowed that must be repaid (with interest).

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID ELIGIBILITY:

To be eligible you must:

- Have financial need.
- Have a high school diploma, GED, or pass an independently administered test approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Be enrolled in an eligible program.
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Register with Selective Service, if required.
- Complete forms as required.
- Make satisfactory academic progress.

CSS/FINANCIAL AID PROFILE:

Some colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools and scholarship programs use the information collected on the PROFILE to help them award private, non-federal student aid funds. Check to see if the college to which you are applying requires this form.

The information is available in the Counseling Center. You can apply online to find out how to get your own customized PROFILE Application packet. This packet includes a personalized PROFILE Application – the questions that all students answer plus any additional questions required by the particular colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools and scholarship programs from which you are seeking aid.

If one or more of the schools to which you are applying also require another CSS form (like the Business/Farm Supplement), it is included in your customized packet.

In order for CSS to customize your PROFILE Application packet, you need to register.

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID:

STEP 1

Check with each college's financial aid office to determine which forms you need to file. Do not wait to be accepted to college before filing an application for financial aid. File early to ensure that you are considered for all available funding.

The most important forms are:

- **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)** - Everyone applying for federal and most other financial aid must complete this form. File online at www.fafsa.ed.gov or by mail.
- **NYS Express TAP Grant and Scholarship Application (ETA)** - NYS residents attending a college in NYS use this free form with the FAFSA to apply for a TAP grant and to request payment for NYS scholarship awards. If you list a NYS college on your FAFSA, you will receive a TAP ETA by mail if you use the paper FAFSA. You will be prompted to complete the TAP ETA online if you complete the online FAFSA.
- **PROFILE** - Some colleges may ask you to file this form to be considered for college-funded aid (the college's own grants and scholarships). There is a fee for filing this form.
- **College-specific financial aid application** - Some colleges may ask you to complete their own financial aid application to be considered for their own college-funded grants, scholarships and loans.

The FAFSA and the PROFILE forms are available in the Counseling Center or on the internet. Request the college's own financial aid application, if required. Follow each college's filing requirements and deadlines.

STEP 2

Complete and mail the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1st of your high school senior year. If your family has not yet completed their income tax returns, estimate your family's income as accurately as possible. You will have the opportunity to make corrections later in the process. If you are a NYS resident applying to colleges in the state, make sure you include a New York college on your FAFSA to begin application for a NYS TAP grant. Complete any other financial aid forms required by the colleges. Meet all deadlines. Keep a copy of all the forms you file.

By filing the FAFSA, you will be considered for:

- Grants and scholarships from private colleges and universities (some colleges may require an additional form).
 - Federal Pell Grant
 - Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

- Federal Work Study (FWS)
- Job programs from private colleges and universities
- Federal Perkins Loan
- Federal Stafford Loan or Federal Direct Loan
- Loan Programs from private colleges and universities

STEP 3

You will receive your Federal Student Aid Report (SAR) approximately 30 days after submitting your FAFSA. Review your SAR's information carefully. Follow the directions to correct any errors.

STEP 4

In the spring (usually March or April), you will receive financial aid “awards” or “packages” from the colleges that have offered you admission, each with a different combination of grants, scholarships, work study and loans to help you meet college expenses.

Determine your “net cost” by subtracting all grants and scholarships plus the total amount of your loans from tuition and fees and room and board (if you are living on campus).

STEP 5

Review your financial aid award letters and compare your net costs. Follow the college's instructions to accept or reject the offers of admission and financial aid, usually by May 1st. Then review your financial aid with your chosen college.

In particular:

- Follow up on your loans. Check with your college financial aid office for their student and parent loan application procedures. Know what you are borrowing and the repayment terms.
 - NYS students attending college in the state:
 - Follow up on your NYS Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grant.
 - Review, and if necessary, correct the data on your Express TAP Application (ETA) sent to you by NYSHESC.

STEP 6

You must apply to renew your financial aid each year - **on time** - or risk losing it! Check your college's deadlines.

Questions to ask the colleges:

- Which forms are required to be considered for all forms of aid?
- What are your requirements for merit aid?
- What are your requirements for need-based aid?
- What are the renewal requirements?
- What are the application deadlines?
- Are there state programs I should know about?
- When will you notify me of my aid eligibility?
- How will outside scholarships affect my financial aid package?

FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS:

Major sources of aid:

- **Grants and scholarships** are funds you do not have to repay. They are available from colleges, your state, the federal government, professional and service organizations, private foundations and many employers. Some grants are based on your financial need while others are awarded for academic merit, a specific career goal or group affiliation.
- **Work study programs** provide opportunities to earn money while you are in college by working part time on campus or in the community.
- **Educational loans** for college costs may be made to you and/or your parents. This aid must be repaid, usually with interest. Loans are sponsored by the federal government, many private colleges and banks.
- **Alternatives for parents and students** include interest free tuition payment plans, low interest loans, lines of credit, tuition tax deductions and credits.

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

Grants and scholarships from NYS private colleges and universities - \$1.7 billion:

- Aid from a college may range up to \$15,000 or more per year, covering part or all of your tuition, fees and related costs. Eligibility is determined primarily by financial need as calculated from the financial aid forms you completed (need-based awards). Colleges may also take into account academic achievement or talent in athletics, music or other fields (merit-based awards).
- To be considered for aid from many private colleges and universities, you will be asked to file the FAFSA. An additional college financial aid application or the PROFILE may also be required for the college's own grants and scholarships.

Check with each financial aid office to determine which forms you need to complete to be considered for need-based and merit-based aid. File the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1st. File all other financial aid forms by their specified deadlines.

Federal Pell Grants at NYS private colleges and universities - \$220 million:

- Pell Grants are awarded to undergraduate students enrolled full or part time in a degree or approved certificate program. The maximum Pell Grant for the 2013-2014 award year is \$5,550.
- Eligibility for Pell is based on financial need determined by total income, net worth (excluding home and family farm equity), family size and the number of children in college.
- To apply, file the FAFSA.

NYS Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants at private colleges and universities - \$245 million:

- TAP is a grant program for NYS residents attending a NYS college full time. Effective for the 2007-2008 academic year and thereafter, TAP is available for students attending SUNY, CUNY and not-for-profit independent degree-granting colleges on a part time basis.
- Eligibility for TAP is based on NYS net taxable income.
- To apply for TAP, you must first file the FAFSA. If you list a NYS college or university on your FAFSA, New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (NYSHESC) will send you a pre-printed NYS Express TAP application (ETA) by mail or you will be prompted to complete an online TAP ETA if you file the FAFSA online. Review the data printed on your ETA and, after you decide which college in the state you will attend, sign and return your corrected ETA to NYSHESC. If you have questions about TAP, call 1-888-NYSHESC.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG):

- Funded jointly by the federal government and the colleges, FSEOG awards range up to \$4,000 per year for full or part time undergraduate students with financial need who are Pell Grant recipients. Colleges select recipients and determine award amounts based on the FSEOG funds available at their college. To apply, file the FAFSA.

Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP):

- HEOP is a comprehensive program for academically and economically disadvantaged NYS students. It provides financial aid to cover the majority of college costs, academic tutoring and educational counseling. For information, contact the college's admissions or the HEOP office. Visit www.nycolleges.org/financialhtml.

Scholarships from private sources:

- Grants and scholarships are available from many community organizations such as Dollars for Scholars (matched by some colleges), businesses, corporations, unions and churches. Check with your school counselor, public library, employer, chamber of commerce, union, community and special-interest organizations.

STUDENT LOANS:

Federal Stafford Loans - unsubsidized:

Eligibility is not based on financial need. You are responsible for paying the interest charges on the loan. Interest begins to accrue immediately. Repayment on the principal and interest begins six months after you are no longer enrolled at least half time. However, you may begin to pay on the interest and/or principal sooner.

Federal Stafford Loans – subsidized:

Eligibility is based on your financial need as calculated from information you provide on your FAFSA. There is no income cutoff as long as you demonstrate need. The Federal Government pays the interest on the loan while you are in college. You begin repayment six months after you are no longer enrolled at least half time.

Federal Perkins Loans:

Undergraduates may borrow up to \$5,500 per year and up to \$27,500 total for undergraduate study. The Federal Government pays the fixed 5% interest until you begin repayment. Repayment begins nine months after you are no longer enrolled at least half time (up to 10 years to repay). Exceptional financial need and the availability of funds determine eligibility. To apply, file the FAFSA.

ALTERNATIVES FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS:

Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (FPLUS):

Parents and/or stepparents may borrow up to the cost of attendance, less other financial aid, each year for each undergraduate dependent child. Eligibility is not based on need. FPLUS loans can be used to meet your calculated family contribution. Parents may have up to 10 years to repay. Interest paid may be tax deductible.

Alternative Loans:

Many lenders offer alternative loans to help families pay for college. These loans offer competitive interest rates and varying, flexible repayment terms. For information, check with your college financial aid office.

Loan programs from private colleges and universities:

For information, check the college's catalog or contact the financial aid office.

WORK STUDY:

Federal College Work Study Program (FCWS):

Eligibility is based on financial need. Students usually work 10 to 15 hours per week. The "package" from the college usually includes work study.

Home equity loans or line of credit:

These methods of financing an education offered by many banks enable parents to access the equity in their home. When used for educational purposes, there may be significant tax advantages. Consult your tax advisor.

Interest-free monthly payment plans:

Interest-free, insured, monthly installment plans are available at many colleges for payment of tuition, fees, room and board and other expenses. Generally, 10 or 12 month payment options are available at no interest. Check with the college.

AmeriCorps:

AmeriCorps is a federal volunteer program. Participants serve for 10 to 12 months. At the completion of service, full-time participants receive an education award. The voucher may be used to pay off qualified student loans or pay for future education expenses at qualified schools. For more information call 1-800-942-2677, or visit www.americorps.org.

Federal incentive programs for higher education:

Visit: www.ed.gov/offices/POE/PPI/HOPE/index.html or consult your tax advisor for information about: the Hope Scholarship (tax credit), the Lifetime Learning Credit (tax credit), the Student Loan Interest Deduction (tax deduction, education savings accounts (tax free), IRA withdrawals, employer-provided education benefits, community service loan forgiveness and expanded benefits for pre-paid tuition plans.

New York State college tuition tax credit/deductions:

A refundable credit/itemized deduction for a percentage of qualifying undergraduate tuition expenses (\$10,000 maximum) has been phased in. Consult your tax advisor or go to www.hesc.com/college_tuition_tax_credit.html.

New York's College Savings Program:

Start a college savings program with a minimum \$25 deposit. You need not be a NYS resident, although NYS taxpayers can receive a NYS income tax deduction for contributions up to \$5,000 annually (up to \$10,000 for married couples filing jointly). Qualified withdrawals are exempt from state and federal income taxes. Savings may be used to meet college costs at any eligible college or university. For details: 1-877-YSAVS or www.nysaves.org.

Important Financial Aid Phone Numbers:

Federal Student Aid Info Center (FAFSA, Pell Grants, FSEOG, Perkins Loans, Stafford Loans)	800-4-FED-AID 800-433-3243
NYSED (TAP, Merit Scholarships, Scholarships of Excellence, Empire State and Liberty Scholarships)	518-474-5642 800-642-6234
CSS/Financial Aid Profile	800-778-6888

SCHOLARSHIPS:

There is not a college bound student in the nation who does not know how tough it is to finance an education today. The cost at several well known private universities has skyrocketed to over \$40,000 for one year and is rising steadily. Even the cost of attending a public institution has increased to the point where middle class or wealthier families are struggling to come up with enough money. Close to two-thirds of today's students receive some sort of financial aid. The bulk of this aid comes from the federal and state governments but another significant portion comes from colleges themselves that recognize that government dollars are not enough. Most of this aid goes to students who have demonstrated financial need and who apply through the traditional application process.

Close to half of what students receive are loans that they or their families must pay back later. That leaves the family no option but to make do with less or borrow more. While borrowing to pay for college is still an excellent investment since a college

graduate will earn significantly more than someone who does not graduate, there is great concern that many students and families are taking on too large a burden by borrowing so much.

Alternatives:

There have to be some alternatives for families other than borrowing more money and for students who do not quite qualify for need-based aid but who know paying college bills will still be very hard on their families. One of these alternatives is scholarships for students who have an outstanding talent and would like to be rewarded for it financially.

For all students of accomplishment who are seeking additional sources of college money, there is a large and, too often overlooked, reservoir of funds to tap. A merit scholarship is one that is based on specified performance or accomplishments rather than on financial need. Most colleges today offer their own merit scholarships, often to achieve their recruitment goals. We are all familiar with the many athletic grants awarded to top athletes. In the past, most of the funds went to those who participated in the high profile men's sports. That has changed dramatically. Now many women and men who excel in any of a variety of sports receive scholarships to play on the college team.

But colleges also award scholarships to excellent musicians and artists, to scientists and journalists, to student leaders and to community activists. A college that wants to recruit you may offer you a scholarship, regardless of need. If you do qualify for need-based aid, the college may "sweeten the pot" by giving you more grant aid. Many colleges offer a higher percentage of grant aid (in comparison with loans) to students with high GPA's. To learn more about how colleges award scholarships, you should read their brochures and materials carefully. It is also a good idea to talk directly with an admissions representative and the head of the academic department in which you plan to enroll.

Many states offer merit-based scholarships to their residents who attend college within the state, such as the NYS Merit Scholarship. This scholarship is based on your regents exam grades. These scholarships are often based on your high school grades, your score on the SAT or your rank in your graduating class, if appropriate.

COMPUTER SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH COMPANIES:

In the past several years, many computer scholarship search companies have sprung up around the country. But college financial aid administrators and high school counselors are largely distrustful of these companies. In fact, the Federal Trade Commission has issued warnings to students about many of these companies.

Most search companies are run by people who have little or no experience with financial aid or scholarships. They tend to charge a lot of money (between \$45 and \$200)

for information that can be found - free of charge - in libraries, guidance offices, bookstores, colleges and on the internet.

In addition, they do not tell you that all they do is provide you with a list of scholarships for which you may be eligible, but still have to apply for. When they say they guarantee you something, all they are guaranteeing is a list of potential sources.

Furthermore, some of the “scholarships” they list are federal or state programs or scholarships specific to one individual college (for which you will be eligible anyway if you attend there). Some are not even scholarships but low interest loans.

On the other hand, it is possible that a computerized scholarship search will locate a few of the more obscure awards that you could win. To be fair, not all people work with financial aid problems every day. Counselors, financial aid administrators, and even the Better Business Bureau or Federal Trade Commission can give you insight into a computerized scholarship search company’s offer of quick cash.

Types of Competitions:

There are three basic types of merit-based scholarship competitions:

- Programs that offer scholarships and awards primarily on the basis of specific performance in some area - through competitive judging of student writing, speeches, projects, artwork, performance or special tests.
- Programs that evaluate a student’s past achievements in areas that may include academics, leadership or involvement in school and community.
- Programs that base awards on both past and present achievement by evaluating past academic records and outside activities as well as performance in a current competition.

There are many scholarship books available in the Counseling Center as well as a variety of websites you can access as follows:

WHERE TO LOOK:

The Financial Aid
Information Page
www.finaid.org

Great source of general information, plus an especially rich variety of online calculators

Fastweb
www.fastweb.com

Database of 180,000 private scholarships,
E-mails data on grants that match your profile

Education Dept.
[www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/
index.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/index.html)

Extensive information on federal loan and grant
programs; also allows online filing of federal
FAFSA form

COLLEGE MONEY MATTERS
<http://www.signet.com/collegemoney/com>

NY STATE HESC
www.hesc.com

Other scholarship programs:

Learn more information at www.hesc.org.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| • Aid for Part-Time Study (APTS)* | contact your college |
| • Aid to Native American Indians | 1-202-219-2342 |
| • Aid to Native Americans Award* | 1-518-474-0537 |
| • Award for Children of Veterans (CV) | 1-888-NYSHESC |
| • Lottery Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship* | contact Counseling Center |
| • Memorial Scholarship for Families of Deceased Firefighters, Volunteer Firefighters, Police Officers, Peace Officers, and Emergency Medical Service Workers | 1-888-NYSHESC |
| • Military Service Recognition (MSRS) | 1-888- NYSHESC |
| • NYS Educational Incentive Program – Army National Guard* | 1-800-GO-GUARD |
| • Regents Professional Opportunity Scholarship* | 1-518-486-1319 |
| • Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship | contact Counseling Center |
| • Scholarship for Academic Excellence* | contact Counseling Center |
| • Stafford Loan Forgiveness for Teachers | 1-888-NYSHEC |
| • Vietnam Veterans/Persian Gulf Veterans Tuition Award (WTA/PGVTA)* | 1-888-NYSHEC |
| • Volunteer Recruitment Service Scholarship for Volunteer Fire and Ambulance Recruits* | 1-888-NYSHEC |
| • World Trade Center Memorial Scholarship | 1-888-NYSHEC |

***For NYS residents only**

Special thanks to Scott White, Montclair High School, Montclair, New Jersey, for his invaluable contributions to this booklet.

COLLEGE VISIT WORKSHEET
(Take a worksheet with you to each college you visit)

College visited _____ Date _____

Interviewer _____ Phone _____

Admissions Officer _____ Phone _____

What I thought of:

Campus _____ Local Town _____

Classrooms _____ Campus Store _____

Dorms _____ Students _____

Dining _____ Transportation _____

Sports/Recreation _____ Other _____

Library _____

Would I fit in and feel comfortable here?

Does this school seem to fit my needs?

My General Impression: (It's very important to write your impressions immediately after visiting a campus. No doubt you will be seeing several schools consecutively and it is easy to confuse various aspects of each particular college).

THANK YOU NOTE TO YOUR INTERVIEWER

Your Street Address
Town, State, Zip Code
Date

Interviewer's Name
College Name
Address
Town, State, Zip Code

Dear (Dr., Mr., Mrs., or Ms.) _____:

Thank you very much for spending time with me on (date). I enjoyed meeting you and appreciated the chance to see (name of college). I especially enjoyed the opportunity to (here you can mention a specific part of the interview).

Once again, thank you for the interview. It will help me in the rest of my application process to (name of college).

Sincerely

(signature) Print
your name