



The Southern Association
for College Admission Counseling

MINI-CAMP COLLEGE:

TACKLING THE COLLEGE SEARCH

CO-SPONSORED BY:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Laying the Groundwork

Setting a timeline, exploring your criteria, and conducting research.

Timeline	4
Self Analysis Worksheet	5
Gathering Information	6
Helpful Websites.....	7
Important Admission and Testing Dates.....	9

Visiting Colleges

Scheduling your visit well in advance, understanding the nature of the interview, preparing for the interview, and getting the answers you need.

Preparing for your College Visit.....	11
Mastering the Admission Interview	12
Getting the Most Out of your College Visit and Tour	14

Applying for Admission

Narrowing your choices, understanding types of admission, insuring that your file is complete, applying for financial aid and scholarships.

The Application Process	21
How Colleges Make Admission Decisions	23

Going to the College of Your Choice

Some tips and suggestions to smooth your transition into college.

How Do You Decide?.....	26
Necessary Paperwork & Helpful Hints.....	27

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

TIMELINE FOR CHOOSING YOUR COLLEGE

It's never too early to start thinking about college; some students even start their college search as early as freshman year of high school. By your **junior** year, however, you should be familiar with general college admission requirements, various timelines, and begin taking a serious look at which colleges may be a fit for you.

Discuss appropriate scheduling with your high school counselor. He or she can be of great assistance as you consider your interests and how they might relate to your college search. It is wise to practice taking the SAT or ACT through practice tests in a book or on the Internet.

Having taken these things into consideration, you are ready to begin your search! Essentially there are five major stages in choosing a college:

- Self Analysis
- Gathering Information
- Visiting
- Applying
- Deciding

GATHERING INFORMATION

Once you have determined what you are looking for in a school, it's time to gather information about specific colleges and universities. The following are some great sources of information:

- Counseling/Guidance Office at your high school
- Guide books (Peterson's, The Princeton Review, Fiske, etc) and magazines (Next Step)
 - However, be cautious when reviewing guidebooks and don't put all of your faith in the rankings. Remember that it's best to rely on more scientifically grounded and accurate studies, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement
- Internet (see enclosed list of useful websites)
- College fairs and visits to your high school by college representatives
- Brochures, view books, and video visits
- Individual college websites
- Friends, relatives, neighbors, etc. that currently attend a school of interest

Throughout this process you will be receiving an enormous amount of mail, requiring you to be very organized. **Create a system that allows you to prioritize and readily identify schools that appear to match some of your qualifications.** For example, create a file for each college that interests you. It is important to constantly update your system as your college choices change! Eventually you will need to **create a list of colleges to visit** as you eliminate others from your list of possibilities.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Exploring College

ACT	http://www.act.org
Black Excel	http://www.blackexcel.org
CB Net	http://www.cbnet.com
College Board	http://www.collegeboard.org
College Express	http://www.collegeexpress.com
College Plan	http://collegeplan.org
College Preview	http://www.college-preview.com/new/html/index.htm
College View	http://www.collegeview.com
College Visits	http://www.college-scholarships.com
Dept. of Edu. Home Page	http://www.ed.gov
Education Info	http://www.educationinfo.com
Go College	http://www.gocollege.com
Hillel	http://www.hillel.org
Historically Black Colleges	http://www.smart.net/~pope/hbcu/hbculist.htm
International Colleges	http://www.ies-ed.com
Jesuit Colleges	http://www.ajcunet.edu
NACAC	http://www.nacacnet.org
Peterson's	http://www.petersons.com
Princeton Review	http://www.princetonreview.com/college.default.asp
Top 10 Activist Colleges	http://www.motherjones.com/news/outfront/2003/09/ma_508_01.html
Virtual Campus Tours	http://www.campustours.com

Athletics

NAIA	http://www.naia.org
NCAA	http://www.ncaa.org
Nat'l Recruiting Network	http://www.nationalrecruits.com
Univ Sports Programs	http://www.universitysports.com
Division III Athletics	http://www.collegestudentathletes.com

Financial Aid

CSS Profile	https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp
FAFSA	http://www.fafsa.ed.gov
Fin Aid Info Page	http://www.finaid.org
Fin Aid Estimator	http://www.finaid.org/finaid/calculators/estimate.html
HOPE Scholarship	http://www.gsfc.org
Peterson's FA Page	http://www.petersons.com/finaid
Sallie Mae FA Info	http://salliemae.com
Yahoo FA Info	http://www.yahoo.com/education/financial_aid

Scholarships

CollegeExpress	http://www.collegeexpress.com
CollegeNET	http://www.collegenet.com
College Scholarships	http://www.college-scholarships.com
FastWeb	http://www.fastweb.com
Florida Bright Futures	http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/
Go College	http://www.gocollege.com
Georgia HOPE Scholarship	http://www.gsfc.org
Scholarships.com	http://www.scholarships.com

Links to College Home Pages

All about College	http://www.allaboutcollege.com
Campus Tours	http://www.campustours.com
Canadian Colleges	http://uwaterloo.ca/canu

Loan Information

eStudent Loan	http://www.esudentloan.com
MFEA Loans	http://www.nelliemae.org
Sallie Mae	http://salliemae.com
Student Loans	http://www.studentloanfunding.com

Test Prep

ACT	http://www.actstudent.org
College Adm Testing	http://collegeapps.miningco.com/msub20.htm
College Board Online	http://www.collegeboard.com
College Power Prep	http://www.powerprep.com
ETS	http://www.ets.org
Kaplan Page	http://www.kaplan.com
Princeton Review	http://www.review.com

IMPORTANT ADMISSION & TESTING DATES

February 10, 2009	Deadline for SAT I registration
February 27, 2009	Deadline for April ACT registration
March 14, 2009	SAT test date
March 31, 2009	Deadline for May SAT registration
April 4, 2009	ACT test date
May 2, 2009	SAT test date
May 4 -8, 2009	AP testing week one
May 5, 2009	Deadline for June SAT registration
May 8, 2009	Deadline for June ACT registration
May 11 -15, 2009	AP testing week two
June 6, 2009	SAT test date
June 13, 2009	ACT test date
July 2009	ACT registration opens for remaining 2009 and 2010 test dates SAT registration opens for remaining 2009 and 2010 test dates
Fall 2009	Possible visit to your area by college admission representatives for high school visits, interviews, and college fairs.
September 12, 2009	ACT test date
October 10, 2009	SAT test date
October 24, 2009	ACT test date
November 7, 2009	SAT test date
December 5, 2009	SAT test date
December 12, 2009	ACT test date
January 23, 2010	SAT test date
February 6, 2010	ACT test date
March 6, 2010	SAT test date
April 10, 2010	ACT test date
May 1, 2010	SAT test date
May 2010	AP Testing
June 5, 2010	SAT test date
June 12, 2010	ACT test date

Special Note: The ACT and SAT are both offered on Sundays for students who cannot test on Saturday due to religious convictions or other special circumstances. Please visit the ACT and College Board websites for more information.

VISITING COLLEGES

PREPARING FOR THE COLLEGE VISIT

Visiting the campus is possibly the most important step in actually choosing your college. The visit will allow you to see for yourself whether or not the college is a good fit for you. The photographs you see and the information you read in brochures and on the Internet are useful to an extent. The visit is crucial as you consider which school will become your home for several years.

Plan your visit(s) well in advance, especially if you intend to complete a tour of several colleges during the spring of your junior year or during the summer prior to your senior year.

- **Understand the realities of visiting during the summer.** Many schools do not have a summer academic session, and therefore, many aspects of these colleges will not be visible. In such cases, classes will not be available, and you might not meet many (or any) students. Student rooms in the residence halls might not be occupied, and dining halls might not be serving meals. The summer months provide a great chance for you to see a campus, but certainly plan to visit during the academic year to experience a full range of social and academic possibilities.
- **Consider visiting in conjunction with a special event** such as a lecture, an athletic competition or a special visitation program offered by the admission office.
- **Visit no more than two schools per day!** If you visit multiple colleges during a tour, you will become tired and increase your chances of arriving late to your next appointment. Plan your tour accordingly. Ask colleges for advice on travel times, ease of schedule, etc.
- **Contact each college at least two weeks in advance.** Difficulty in scheduling one visit could affect your visit to others.

Regardless of when you visit, you should plan to:

- Arrive on time (If you will be late or need to postpone your visit, call ahead of time as a courtesy)
- Dress appropriately (nice pants/conservative length skirt, jacket/modest top, and nice shoes)
- Bring your parents or guardians
- Tour the campus
- Speak with an admission representative
- Interact with current students, even working some free time into your schedule to wander around and talk to students who do not volunteer or work for the admission office
- Complete an interview or attend a group information session, if available
- Know your PSAT, SAT or ACT scores and GPA
- Attend a class, if available
- Talk with a professor and/or coach
- Eat a meal in a dining hall
- See a residence hall and/or student room
- Collect business cards of the representative you met with

After the visit, you should:

- Make notes of your thoughts, while they are still fresh in your mind and consider having your parents do the same (These will come in handy in the future)
- Contact the people you met if questions arise after the visit
- Send thank you notes to those with whom you had appointments

MASTERING THE ADMISSION INTERVIEW

A college interview can be one of the most enjoyable and informative aspects of the college admission and selection process. The interview offers the college a chance to get to know you better while affording you the opportunity to ask pertinent questions. Here are some tips to a successful and useful interview experience:

Understand the Importance of the Interview at each College

Interviews serve different purposes at each college. Some colleges require an interview, and others strongly suggest one. Some schools will not offer you the opportunity to interview. If an interview is offered, it will either be evaluative or informational.

1. Evaluative
 - Allows you to distinguish yourself from other candidates
 - Conversation about activities, interests, etc. that supplement your written application
 - A Summary written by interviewer becomes part of your application file and will be used in making admission decisions
2. Informational
 - Allows you to determine which colleges fit you best
 - Conversation about academics, activities, interests, etc.
 - Your questions might outnumber the interviewer's questions

Do Your Research Ahead of Time

You are not expected to know more about the college than the interviewer, but you should know the basic facts prior to the interview. Come prepared with a list of thoughtful questions, and avoid the obvious ones (i.e. What is the student population? What are your deadlines?)

Be prepared to talk about your college search and what is shaping it. Questions such as the following will probably arise. Be prepared!

- What are you looking for in a college?
- What made you want to visit this particular campus?
- What other schools are you considering?

Reflect on Your Experiences

The interviewer might not have a clear picture of your high school or how much you have accomplished. In an effort to assess your achievements, he or she might ask you to comment on:

- Size of your graduating class (and maybe your rank in that class)
- Courses you have taken (Have you challenged yourself?)
- AP and/or IB programs and special programs of study
- Favorite and least favorite subjects
- Favorite experiences and challenging situations you've overcome

Colleges also want to understand what you value and how you spend your free time. Here are some topics that may arise:

- How others, such as teachers, parents and friends might describe you
- Most meaningful activities and hobbies
- Work experience (either paid or voluntary)
- Your goals and ambitions

Remember that First Impressions can be the Most Important

1. Be on time!
2. Appropriate Attire
 - Be yourself, but dress to impress as well! Boys should consider wearing a nice jacket, ironed pants, collared shirt and decent shoes. Girls should consider wearing nice pants or an appropriate length skirt (nice cropped pants are also acceptable), modest top, and appropriate shoes.
 - Being comfortable is also essential. If you will be touring campus, make sure your attire will withstand a walking tour, which might last longer than an hour!
3. Body Language
 - PREPARE
 - Have a firm handshake and maintain good eye contact
 - Use good posture & look attentive - don't slouch in chair!
 - Identify and avoid nervous behavior

Ask Questions!

1. Avoid the obvious.
2. Ask open-ended questions.
3. Prioritize your questions; you may not have time to ask all of them.
4. Some suggested topics for questions about academic life:
 - Admission requirements
 - Orientation, advising and access to professors
 - Internship opportunities and graduate placement statistics
5. Some suggested topics for questions about student life:
 - Residence hall policies (roommate selection, dormitory assignments, etc.)
 - Athletic facilities and opportunity for participation
 - Leadership opportunities and student activities
 - Social life (don't be afraid to make sure that college will involve some fun!)
6. **Toward the end of the interview, it is acceptable to ask the interviewer whether or not you appear to be a reasonable candidate. He or she will assess your candidacy and perhaps suggest some ways for you to strengthen your candidacy at any number of institutions. If you are not a strong candidate for a particular college, this might lead to a discussion about alternative options for you.**
7. Keep your questions consistent with each visit so you can compare each college afterwards.

Additional Interview Tips

- Ask about other opportunities to learn more about the college.
- Be honest and be yourself. Don't try to give the right answer, because it probably does not exist.
- Share your accomplishments! Interviewers expect you to talk about your achievements and interests, and they look forward to hearing them!
- Get the name of the interviewer and write a follow-up note thanking them for the opportunity to visit. This shows your interest in the college.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE COLLEGE VISIT AND TOUR

When visiting a college campus you should be prepared to ask questions concerning the things that interest you most. Answers to the following questions will shed light on the nature of the school and what to expect should you enroll there. Glance through the list and pick a few from each section. Be sure to ask your questions in the interview or on the tour. Don't be intimidated by a large tour group! Remember, if you have a question, someone else on the tour is probably wondering the same thing.

QUESTIONS PARENTS AND STUDENTS SHOULD ASK:

Academic Life

Professors and classes:

What type of access do the students have to the professors?

- Do the professors hold office hours?

Do the students receive academic advising?

- Who advises them, someone in their major area of interest or someone else?

What percentage of the faculty holds the highest degree offered in their respective fields?

- How many of these teach undergraduates? How many classes does each faculty member normally teach each semester/quarter?

Does the institution place a greater academic emphasis on teaching or on research and writing?

Are undergraduate classes, especially introductory courses, taught by professors or by graduate/teaching assistants? In the sciences, who teaches the labs?

What is the student/teacher ratio? But, more importantly, what is the average class size (for undergrads and for upperclassmen)?

- What is the range of class sizes?

Is there discussion in the classroom, or are the classes lecture-oriented?

Student-specific issues:

Are tests proctored or monitored?

Is there an Honor Code?

What are the most popular majors? (This does not necessarily mean the best!)

If you have a specific major or field of study in mind, do they offer it?

Are students able to minor in certain disciplines? Can they double major?

- Is it possible to finish in four years if one does this?
- Is the program balanced between the two majors?

Is tutoring available? If so, is there extra cost involved?

- Are there support services available to students with special needs, such as counseling and/or programs/provisions for students with learning and/or physical differences?

Are there special study skill or time management seminars available if students need them?

Technology:

How well equipped are the facilities? Do students have access to the equipment?

How integrated is computer use in the classroom and around campus?

Is there a fiber optic network throughout the campus? Voice? Data? Video?

Is the network accessible from residence hall rooms as well as classrooms and labs?

Outcomes and opportunities:

What percentage of students graduates in four years?

What is the retention rate of students entering as freshmen? (Be sure to have the person answering the question explain how he or she arrived at that percentage or number)

What are some special programs available to the students such as study abroad or pre-professional programs?

- Can anyone participate in these study abroad programs, or do students have to be majoring in a certain discipline?
- If a student participates, will he or she still be able to graduate in four years?
- Are there scholarships to help with these programs or will financial aid apply?

How do pre-professional programs like pre-med, pre-law, or 3/2 engineering work?

- Must students choose any particular major(s) in order to be in these programs?
- What are the acceptance rates to these professional schools? (Be sure to understand how the percentages were calculated)

History and Special Traditions

What is unique about this college (history, traditions, special programs, travel abroad, etc.)?

How diverse is the college (ethnically, geographically, by major subject areas, etc.)?

How does the type of institution (public vs. private) impact cost and/or financial aid?

Is the college affiliated with a particular religion or organization?

- How does this affiliation affect campus and academic life?
- What happens if a student does not belong to that religion or organization?

Library

What types of services are available to the student? Is special instruction available on using the library?

How large is the collection of primary sources?

What types of resources and/or databases are available for students' use?

How accessible are the librarians or someone at a help desk?

Is the circulation system computerized or on card catalog?

- Can students access the library from their dorm rooms or other places on campus?

How extensive and accessible is the inter-library loan program?

- Is inter-library loan free?
- How long does it typically take to get inter-library loan materials?

What are the library's hours? Do they change during exams and/or vacations?

- Is the library a good studying environment? Where do students tend to study?

Does the library hold any special collections?

- Are there subject areas in which the library is particularly strong?

Does the library work with an open-stack system?

- What are policies regarding checking out books, overdue fines, etc.?
-

Social and Extracurricular Activities

What do students do in their free time?

Do students stay on campus during the weekends? Is this a "suitcase" campus?

Who or what is the main source of student programming? The students or the administration?

In how many and with what types of clubs and organizations can students get involved?

- How easy is it for an underclassman to join?
- Can students start new clubs? How easy is this process?

Are extracurricular activities encouraged by the professors and university?

How are student activities funded? Is there a student activity fee?

- What is covered by this fee (athletic events, concerts, lecture series, etc.)?

How is the campus leadership (or student government) organized? What sorts of things do they do?

Greek Life

Is there a Greek system?

- Are the fraternities and/or sororities national or local organizations?

Does one have to be in the Greek system in order to go to parties or be socially involved?

- Does the Greek system dominate the social scene on campus?

How many students join the Greek system?

What are the benefits of joining a Greek/social organization?

- What do fraternities and sororities do?
- What types of educational, service and social programs does the Greek system promote?

Are there any financial obligations if one joins?

Do the different fraternities and sororities have their own houses?

- Do members live in the houses? If not, for what are the houses used?
- If they do not have houses, do they have meeting and social facilities available?
- Do members eat meals in the houses?

When does rush take place? How does rush work? Is there a later option for students who aren't placed initially and who still want to join?

Residence Halls

Is on-campus housing required? Is it guaranteed?

- Is there a specific dorm for freshmen, or are they interspersed throughout campus?
- What is the process for room assignments for freshmen and for upperclassmen?

What types of residence halls are available? Single-sex? Coed?

- What type of room occupancy is available (single, double, triple, quadruple)?
- Does all housing cost the same, or are there different prices for different room types?

How large are the dorms and how many of them are there?

Are there substance free housing options? What is the university alcohol policy?

How secure are the residence halls (and campus in general)?

- Does the campus have a police or security force?

What sorts of staff (professional or student resident assistant) reside in the halls?

- Do staff members live in the residence halls? How accessible are they to the students?

Are the rooms wired for phone and/or computer?

- How are phone calls made, received, and billed?

What "extras" are available (carpeting, air conditioning, cable TV, laundry facilities, etc.)?

What appliances are permitted in the rooms (refrigerators, microwaves, air conditioners, etc.)?

How good is the food? Are there options for students with special dietary needs?

Athletics

At what level (NCAA Division I/II/III, NAIA, etc.) and in what conference (SCAC, SEC, Big Ten, etc.) does the college/university participate? What other schools are in the conference?

What type of access do students have to athletic facilities?

- Is there an extra cost to students for the use of these facilities?

What sports are available at the varsity level? For men? For women?

- How many students participate in varsity athletics?

How many students get involved in intramural athletics?

- What sports are available?

What sports does the college/university offer?

How does the athletic department or the individual coach view the relationship between athletics and academics?

- How do faculty members view this same relationship?

Are athletes awarded special scholarships, which are not available to other students? In other words, are athletic scholarships available?

- Are such scholarships withdrawn if the student does not, or cannot, play the sport at some point in time?

What types of physical education courses are offered? Are any required?

What types of athletic rivalries or traditions exist on campus?

Career Planning/Placement and Graduate School

How many students go directly into graduate study programs?

- Is going to graduate or professional school encouraged by the college/university?
- How many alumni hold advanced degrees?
- Do only the best students go to the best graduate or professional programs? Which schools do the graduates attend?

What is the college's placement rate into jobs immediately following graduation? 6 months after graduation? One year?

What resources are available to the students and graduates seeking jobs?

- Resume and cover letter workshops?
- Interview workshops with mock interviews?
- Alumni network?
- Career fairs on campus or access to them?
- On-campus interviews by companies and businesses?
- Career search databases?

What internships are available?

- How does one find internships?

What types of jobs have graduates received in their area(s) of interest?

APPLYING TO COLLEGE

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

After you've visited colleges, you will begin the process of actually applying to colleges. Here is some advice concerning your applications.

1. **Know and adhere to application deadlines.** They will vary from college to college, so create a timeline as part of your organized approach. **There are four primary application and deadline types:**

- **Early Decision:** The student applies for admission before the regular decision deadline to an institution and if accepted he/she must make a commitment to attend that institution. Only a student who can make a deliberate and well-reasoned first choice decision should apply under an Early Decision plan because the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1. When applying for Early Decision, academic achievement only through junior year is used as the main criteria for selection. The student may apply to other colleges, but is allowed only **one** Early Decision application pending at any time. Immediately upon acceptance of the offer, the student must withdraw all other applications and make no subsequent applications.

- **Early Action:** Permits a student to apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision during the senior year, well in advance of the normal response dates in the spring. The candidate is not committed to enroll at that particular institution. Technically, the student may apply to other colleges under this plan, but the student needs to clarify this with specific institutions. The student will not be required to make a commitment prior to May 1 but is encouraged to do so as soon as a final college choice is made.

- **Regular Decision:** Student applies for general admission to a college or university. An institution reviews most of its applications prior to notifying the majority of its candidates. The student may apply to other colleges under this decision plan. The student will not be required to make a commitment prior to May 1 but is encouraged to do so as soon as a final college choice is made.

- **Rolling Admission:** An institution reviews applications as they are received and offers decisions to students as they are reviewed. The student may apply to other colleges. The student will not be required to make a commitment prior to May 1 but is encouraged to do so as soon as a final college choice is made.

Source: 1998 Membership Directory, National Association for College Admission Counseling, 289-290.

- **Merit Scholarship:** Student has to meet this deadline in order to be considered for a merit-based scholarship; it is typically different than the other four. In addition, some institutions require an extra writing sample. Not all colleges have a separate deadline or extra writing sample; however, it is extremely important to find out which do.

2. Adhere to deadlines established by your guidance/college counseling office. Many counselors require you to complete your application up to a month prior to the college's deadline, while others ask for all applications to be completed by a set date (sometimes as early as mid-November).
3. Don't apply to every college with which you are familiar. If you've done your homework and prepared yourself, you should be able to limit the number of schools to which you apply. Plan to include the following:

- One or two “reach” schools (colleges at which your chances for admission are uncertain)
- One or two “comfort” schools (colleges where you’re fairly confident about your chances for admission)
- One or two “backup” schools (colleges where your admission is extremely likely)

4. Application Types:

- Institutional applications obtained via mail
- The Common Application (accepted at over 350 colleges around the country)
- Online applications which can be found on colleges’ websites or other locations

5. Arrange for testing agencies to send official standardized test scores (SAT I, SAT II, ACT) directly to each college you are applying to.

6. **Follow the directions!** Answer every applicable question and write (or type) legibly.

7. Understand the different types of admission decisions you might receive.

- **Accept**

- **Conditional Admission:** Some colleges will offer admission which is contingent upon your meeting certain requirements, which might include attending a summer session or enrolling in a specific course your final semester of high school.

- **Wait List:** The college has neither offered nor denied admission, and there is still a possibility that you will be offered admission as space becomes available in the future.

- **Defer:** In this case, your application will automatically be reconsidered at a later time. This often happens when the admission committee wants additional information such as academic progress reports or recommendations.

- **Deny**

8. Always proofread! Be sure to check your spelling and capitalization before submitting any application material (proofreading should not be limited to just your essay). This is not texting messaging; therefore, internet slang is unacceptable.

9. Keep an open mind about all colleges to which you are applying. Try not to eliminate or decide on a college until you have received all admissions decisions, financial aid offers, scholarships, etc.

HOW COLLEGES MAKE ADMISSION DECISIONS

There are several factors that affect the decisions of college and university admission committees. Generally, the most important factor is the high school record. Other important factors are also reviewed and will be considered in the admission decision.

High School Record

1. Program of Study:
 - Number of courses taken each year
 - Subject areas covered by courses
 - Course selection (regular, accelerated, honors, AP, IB), often in comparison with the types of courses offered at the high school
2. Academic Performance:
 - Cumulative GPA
 - Trends in your grades and how you have done from year to year
 - Performance in your core academic subjects
 - Junior and senior year performance (Colleges might interpret a light load or drop in performance as a lack of motivation and/or of continued preparation for college)
3. Academic Strength of High School:
 - An excellent high school academic program and difficult courses should not be used as excuses for lower grades, but differences between high schools are acknowledged by most colleges and universities
 - Most colleges expect you to challenge yourself within the curriculum offered by your high school, but some students may choose alternative options such as independent study and/or local colleges/universities which supplement the high school experience
4. Rank in Class:
 - Not always available or computed
 - Use or importance of rank in class varies among colleges
 - Often used in conjunction with grade point average
 - Looked at when comparing multiple applications from one school
5. Extenuating Circumstances:
 - Extended illness, change of schools, family/personal problems
 - Use as an explanation, NOT an excuse
 - Let colleges know about such pertinent issues (as long as you feel comfortable doing so)

Standardized Test Results

1. Know the Required and/or Preferred Tests:
 - Commonly required tests include one or more of the following: ACT, SAT I, SAT II
 - Does the school require the new writing section of the ACT or SAT I
2. Multiple Scores—Understanding the Policy:
 - If a test is taken more than once, determine which score(s) the college considers (highest total score, highest subscores, average score, most recent score, etc.)

Application Essay(s)

1. Required by some colleges, not by others
2. Your chance to share your thoughts and accomplishments
3. **Do:**
 - Gather admission essay topics early (Some colleges' topics are very similar. Thus, one essay might be appropriate for multiple schools)
 - Be yourself, colleges want to hear **you** speak through your essay
 - Choose a topic about which you are passionate, but avoid hot political or religious issues and boyfriend/girlfriend topics
 - Continually revise and edit, letting many different people read it (teachers, parents, friends)
 - Proofread your essay **several times**
 - Arrive at a well-crafted sample of your writing skills, as if it were a class assignment
4. **Don't:**
 - Write what you think the admission committee wants to read
 - Wait until the last minute or rush the essay
 - Generalize or use extremely broad topics
 - Overwrite or ramble
 - Let careless mistakes distract the reader (Don't simply rely on spell check!)

Recommendations

1. Teacher Recommendation(s):
 - Ask teachers who taught you in core academic courses
 - Consider asking a teacher in whose class you struggled, but worked hard
 - Should include at least one senior or junior year teacher
 - Be respectful of your teacher's time and ask at least two weeks prior to deadline
2. Counselor Recommendation:
 - Usually includes or accompanies the high school transcript
 - Should be requested well before deadlines, as counselors will be writing many such letters
3. Additional Recommendation(s):
 - Alumni of the college(s), friends, coaches, priests/ministers, and employers who all know you well
 - Don't send too many recommendations

Additional Factors

1. Activities and Honors:
 - Leadership, special talents, accomplishments
2. Family Ties (Legacy Status)
3. Timeliness and Neatness of the Application
4. Auditions, Resumes and/or Portfolios
 - Often required for special programs and/or scholarships (music, theatre, art, etc.)

GOING TO THE COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE!

HOW DO YOU DECIDE?

The purpose of carefully conducting a thorough college search is to help you discover which schools best fit your needs. Hopefully your final decision will be a little less stressful than you originally thought. There are a couple of things you can do which may help you make that final choice.

- Consider visiting your top choices again - try to visualize yourself on campus. Spend the night in a dorm, go to class, and talk to current students. Get a real feel for what it will be like to attend that school.
- Ask as many questions as possible. You can talk to alumni, friends, family, admission representatives, counselors, employers, and a number of other people whose opinions you value.
- Revisit your self-analysis; how do the schools match up?
- By the time you are admitted you should have a pretty good idea of what the actual cost of attendance will be. Now you can weigh the cost and the benefits of attending each institution on your final list.
- Remember that **the decision ultimately should be yours!** You will be the one attending the school for the next four years! Obviously the opinions of friends and family members are important, but make sure you are comfortable with the choice you make.

Going to the College of Your Choice

Necessary Paperwork

Once you have decided which school you will attend, don't hesitate to mail your deposit and enrollment form. **It is imperative that you only make an enrollment deposit at one institution.** The national decision deadline is May 1. Make sure you've deposited by this date. Also take a moment to notify the other schools to which you've applied that you will not be attending.

Find out from the school you have decided to attend if it is advantageous for you to take applicable AP and/or IB examinations. If so, make sure you have official score reports sent to that institution.

There are additional forms that you will need to complete. Most schools will mail housing preference forms home in the summer, but these may also be available online. Fill them out and get them back as soon as possible. Sometimes housing is on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Most schools will require you to have a physical examination prior to orientation. You may need to have their medical form completed and signed by a physician. You may want to schedule this appointment for June after graduation. Believe it or not, with so many people needing physicals for high school sports and to enter college, these appointments can fill up fast! You will also need to provide proof of medical insurance and fill out the emergency care information.

Other Helpful Hints

Contact your roommate during the summer to determine who will bring the stereo, refrigerator, T.V., etc! This is a great way to offset any anxieties about leaving home.

Finish your senior year strongly and arrange for a copy of your final high school transcript to be sent to the college you have chosen. **Yes, your second semester does matter.** Most schools do check to see how you finished the year and will expect a satisfactory explanation if your grades drop. Some schools will retract an offer of admission to students who end up with unsatisfactory final grades.

Pack well ahead of your moving date and remember that most dorm rooms are very small, and you will probably be sharing that space. Take the bare essentials and have your parents send the rest, as you need it. Enjoy your freshman year knowing that you made the right decision.

**SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING
(SACAC)**

WWW.SACAC.ORG

CO-SPONSORS:

ACT

WWW.ACT.ORG

THE COLLEGE BOARD

WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS

WWW.NSHSS.ORG