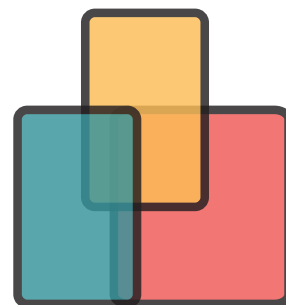


# LONG ISLAND

HIGH SCHOOL  
FOR THE

# ARTS

## COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK



LIHSA



# **Long Island High School for the Arts College Planning Handbook**

**Fall 2019 Edition**

# IN THE BEGINNING

You are at the beginning of the college choice process. At the end, you will have made choices and have undergone an important stage of every Long Island High School for the Arts student's education.

The college counselor will enter into a significant relationship with you and will attempt to guide and advise you through the college process. Our hope is that you will learn a great deal about yourself. For LIHSA seniors, this choice involves much thought and time. Therefore, consider your college goals when thinking through your senior year program.

Each student starts the college process in his or her own unique way. Some have already made choices while others have no idea of what they wish to do for the next four years. Some students are anxious, others seem calm. There is no right or wrong way to begin this educational experience. Start by exploring colleges in your own unique way. It is important that your counselor learn how you approach tasks and how they can help you make constructive choices for yourself.

Some students make the error of trying to be the person they think colleges want them to be. While it is important to learn about colleges, the key for students is to clearly define their unique interests and strengths. In other words, start with knowing yourself well. Let the college choices flow from that. Remember, family, friends, teachers and counselor, coupled with your own inner strength, can be the power base from which you achieve your designed goal.

## SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT...

“...I hope kids and their parents will go into the college application process realizing that it's not necessarily fair, it's not necessarily meritocratic, and even if they do everything 'right', they still can't be assured that they will get what they think they want. I hope that, understanding this, families will refocus their efforts away from attaining the Holy Grail of admission to a particular elite school and toward the realization that there are many great colleges and universities in this country, many places where students will be happy and can acquire a good education. And, that if they don't get into their dream school, it is only their application that is being denied.”

Rachel Toor, former admissions officer at Duke University  
Author of Admissions Confidential, St. Martin's Press

# INTRODUCTION

## *WHERE DO I START?*

The Long Island High School for the Arts Guidance Department has created this handbook to provide you with step-by-step assistance through the college selection process. Each student should review his/her own academic performance, individual talents, needs and interests. The next step is to research colleges and universities that have programs and services which will meet the student's needs. The student should share this research with his or her parents and counselor. Your counselor has the experience and knowledge to assist you through the college search and application processes.

We think the biggest trap families can fall into as they approach this process is to merely consider the academic reputation of an institution. While that is certainly important, the prestige of an institution in the eyes of the world has absolutely no bearing on a student's ability to thrive on its campus. For a student to try and "fit" himself/herself into an institution based solely on academic reputation is a mistake.

## *MYTHS ABOUT COLLEGE*

*\*Students typically begin to research colleges during their junior year. By the end of your junior year, you should have a working list of about twenty colleges that you investigate during the spring and summer. By the fall of your senior year, you will have deleted schools from the list and added others. Your goal is to develop a final list of about ten schools, at any one of which you would be happy and successful if you were to find yourself there as a student. \**

In order to really begin the college selection process, it is useful to dispel some of the most common myths about this process. They are:

**Colleges are either good or bad.** By whose criteria is the "goodness" or "badness" of a college measured? Instead of asking the question, "Is X a good college?" you should ask, "Is X a good college for me?"

**Future employers and graduate schools give an edge to those who have degrees from prestigious universities.** Not necessarily. Employers and graduate schools are more interested in your accomplishments and what you have to offer than the name of the college you attended.

**Colleges always choose the "best" students.** The admissions process is a human one, and it might not always be what you would consider to be fair. You might be admitted to schools that are not appropriate for you. Other students, less qualified than you, might be admitted to schools that you wanted to attend but that did not admit you.

**The more rigorous the admission standards, the higher the quality of education.**

Wrong. Admission statistics could have a lot to do with a recent performance by one of the school's athletic teams, a mention in a national magazine, or its sweatshirt being worn by someone on a popular television show. Many excellent colleges have applicant pools that are self-selective, so their admission rates are higher. Many state schools have quotas for in- and out-of-state students. The numbers have little to do with quality.

**Cost is really important in determining where I can go to college, so I may not be able to attend the college I want to attend.** It is true, unfortunately, that ability to pay for your education is playing a larger role in the admissions process today than it did a few years ago, but ability to pay should not be your first criterion for not applying to a school you would like to attend. There is a lot of money available from many sources to help needy students pay for college – you just have to do a lot of research, take an active role in the pursuit of assistance, and be creative. See the chapter in this handbook on financial aid.

**Test scores are the most important criterion in college admission.** You will read more about this later in this handbook, but in fact, this is not true for most colleges. Because of the changes in the SAT content and scoring, some colleges have even made the SAT optional. The vast majority of colleges look at all parts of your application and what you will bring to their campus community. Your standardized test scores might get you into the ballpark of the applicant pool, and they may keep you out at other places. But in the end, for most colleges, your high school transcript (school, courses, and grades) will be most important.

**There is only one perfect college for me.** There is no one perfect college, and each year thousands transfer from the schools they thought were perfect.

**I am a failure if I do not get into College X.** There are many reasons you might not be accepted to a particular college. Competition is tough, and a denial is not necessarily a reflection of your qualifications. Please don't judge your own self-worth by a single college's acceptance or denial. You're better than that.

### ***OTHER MYTHS ABOUT THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:***

**I need to decide on my career before I can choose a college.** College is your time to explore. Except in a few specific situations, you can choose a major in your sophomore year and still complete the degree in four years. A surprising number of students discover their ideal field while taking course they didn't expect to like. If you're not ready, don't let well-meaning friends pressure you into deciding on a major field or a career before you choose a college. Take your time.

**If I haven't heard of a college or university, it can't be very good.** You may not hear about many of the nation's finest colleges until you are well into your adult life. Athletics on television is how most colleges get to be known, but many great colleges do not get that kind of exposure. Don't let name recognition determine a good or bad college.

**A lot of out-of-class activities will compensate for poor grades.** Admittedly, colleges consider out-of-class activities when they review an application. But colleges look at your academic performance first. Lots of out-of-class activities help only if the college already believes you can do the work.

**Big colleges are best if you haven't decided on a major field.** Many students think that because there are more courses to choose from, a large college offers greater options for undecided students. However, choices alone should not be the deciding factor. If you are undecided, the best college is one that has core requirements or distribution requirements that ensure you will explore new areas and fields.

Also, look for colleges with the strongest academic advising and career counseling programs regardless of their size. Good advising can help you choose an academic and career path you will enjoy rather than one you think you might like right now.

**The quality of the academic program in which I am interested is the most important characteristic of a college.** About two of five students change their major fields of interest before they actually enroll in college, and about one of the two changes the major field once enrolled. Look for a college that has your current field of interest but is also strong in all its areas.

It's worth noting that the research on success in graduate school and in employment after college suggests that the best way to master a major field is a combination of learning theory and active, hands-on-learning by doing. What's more valuable is having the opportunity to do research on your own or to work side by side with a professor on a project rather than simply taking more courses in the field.

**The best time to visit college is after you have been admitted.** Many students have fallen for this myth only to find that none of the colleges to which they were admitted "felt" right when they visited. If possible, visit before you apply and again after you have been admitted. If you can visit only once, make it before you apply.

**Your life will be ruined if you don't get admitted to your first choice college.** Thousands of students each year do not get admitted to their first choice college and most are happy, healthy individuals today. Yes, rejection is hard on your ego, but you will not be alone. Additionally, the vast majority of students who settle for their second choice end up happy at that institution anyway. Remember, college admission, especially at the more selective colleges, has to be subjective. With thousands of applications and only a small staff, it is impossible to assess each applicant objectively. Some applications stand out. Some don't.

**Colleges are concerned only with my intellectual and academic development.** Many college and universities pride themselves on their ability to "develop the whole person." Some of this personal development comes from requiring a broad-based general education that contributes to your understanding of the world and society. Some of the personal growth takes place in the residence halls where you learn things like tolerance and how to get along with different kinds of people. In some cases, personal and professional development is intentional.

At these colleges, there are workshops open to students on time management, developing relationships, handling yourself at a job interview, and your responsibilities as a citizen.

**Only the very best students receive financial aid from colleges.** If you are admitted and have financial need, colleges generally want to make it possible for you to attend. In fact, the greatest proportion of financial assistance at private colleges tends to go to students in the middle of the class. High-ability students or students with special talents may receive “merit based scholarships.”

**State supported institutions offer more financial aid from colleges.** State supported colleges and universities offer very little of their own resources for financial assistance. State supported institutions are subsidized by their respective states and that allows them to charge less. However, state institutions are also more likely to offer only loans to students who do not have a high need.

**The federal government provides most of the financial aid.** Government funds comprise only a very small proportion of the financial aid available. In fact, the government continually reduces the amount of grant money – money that does not need to be paid back. Private colleges, especially, supply the largest portion of financial aid.

## ***WHAT KIND OF COLLEGE DO I WANT? SELF-EVALUATION***

It is up to you to decide what you want in a college. Your goals, values, interests and preferences will be important factors in determining which colleges belong on your initial list.

You must also become a good consumer in the college market. For the next year of your life, you will be the target of college public relations specialists who will send you reams of advertisements in the hope of getting you to apply. Unless you begin with some framework about what you are looking for in a college, you will easily become overwhelmed by the information sent to you.

We suggest that you ask yourself some preliminary questions about college as you begin to assemble your list. Some appear below. If your answer to any of the questions is “I don’t care,” or “That doesn’t matter to me” then you are probably not approaching this task seriously enough. Four years is a long time to spend in one place!

### **What kind of College?**

- What do you want in an education? Why do you want to go to college?
- What kinds of surroundings are essential to your well-being? Are there certain places, activities, particular terrains, or weather conditions that make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-paced environment where something is happening most of the time? An organized environment where you can join a wide variety of planned activities? A more serene and relaxed environment where you can go your own way?
- What degree of academic challenge is best for you? What balance of study, activities, and social life suits you best? How well do you respond to academic pressure and competition from others?



- How do you want to grow and change in the next few years? What kind of environment would stimulate or inhibit the growth you would like to see?
- What interests do you want to pursue in college? Do your interests require any special facilities, programs, or opportunities? Consider all of your interests, such as fields of study, activities, community and cultural opportunities. Are you more interested in career preparation, technical training or general knowledge and skills of inquisitive thinking?
- How often do you want to be able to go home? What kind of changes in your lifestyle and perspective might be exciting? Or distressing and overwhelming?
- Where would your family like to see you go to school? What kinds of financial considerations exist?
- What amount of risk do you want to assume in your selection of schools? How will you feel about yourself if you are rejected from one or more of your top choices? How do you plan to select your colleges so that you set yourself up for success?

### **The Big Picture Questions**

- How has your environment influenced your way of thinking?
- What do your parents and friends expect of you?
- How have their experiences influenced the goals and standards you set for yourself?
- How would someone who knows you well describe you?
- What are your finest qualities?
- How have you grown, or what changes have you made during your high school years?
- What relationships are most important to you and why?

# A FIRST LIST OF COLLEGES

## *A GOOD FIT*

The best way to start the college search may be to put aside for now, the idea of the “right school.” There are more than 3,400 two- and four- year colleges in the United States. Every student aspires to find a college that is “a good fit,” and it is very possible to achieve this goal. Students and parents should keep in mind, though, that there is seldom just one right school. In reality, there are a number of “right” colleges and universities out there just waiting to be discovered by a student and his/her family.

The college you select should fit **YOU**; the only colleges which deserve the title good, better, or best, are the colleges that are that for **YOU**. Chances are, you will be able to find half dozen colleges, all of which have the characteristics you are seeking. Invest yourself in your search and in this process. Don’t forget that you do have control, but also responsibility. The “process” involves three primary decisions, and **YOU** make two of them: Where you will apply and which school you actually attend among those to which you were admitted.

As you formulate the list of colleges, you should remember the Golden Rule of the college admissions process: Never apply to a college that you would not gladly attend if offered the choice.

## *ORGANIZING INFORMATION*

You will be collecting and processing large amounts of paper and information during the next year. Follow these steps to organize college information and applications.

1. Keep notes on the colleges and a list of things to do in a notebook. You may want to set up a data file on a home computer. Set up columns of likes and dislikes, pros and cons for the different characteristics you’ve decided that your “ideal” college must have. Take particular notes of special programs and requirements.
2. Make and keep a separate folder or file for each college.
3. Note on the calendar the deadlines for applications, test scores, recommendations, interviews, etc. Record due dates and write down the dates you sent/requested for the admission or financial aid applications. Record college fairs, interviews, college visits, and special programs on the calendar.
4. Read and respond promptly to all information sent by the colleges.
5. Take time to read and think about the information provided by each college. Your notes assist in comparing all colleges using the same criteria.

## ***LIST OF CRITERIA***

You may want to create a list of questions, based on your self-evaluation, which you will answer for each college that you investigate. Such questions include:

### **Admissions**

1. How selective is the college?
2. Realistically, what are your chances of getting in?
3. Financial Aid – what kind is offered?
4. What will it cost, including tuition, fees, room and board, transportation, travel to and from campus?

### **Physical Environment**

1. Is the location rural, suburban or urban?
2. How many students does it have?
3. How far is it from home?
4. Are the students mostly commuters or resident?
5. Is campus housing available and guaranteed for all four years?
6. Safety: Are the dorms secure? Is there an escort service at night?
7. Facilities: Are there adequate sports and recreational facilities? Music, art, drama?  
Where do students eat? What meal plans are offered?

### **Academic Environment**

1. Quality of Programs: What are the strengths and weaknesses?
2. Does the college offer academic programs in which you are interested?
3. Faculty: Do students have access to faculty? Do all professors teach undergraduates?
4. Curriculum: Is there a core course curriculum? How much freedom do you have in course selection? What courses must you take to satisfy requirements?
5. Internships: What is available? Do any of them pay a salary or stipend?
6. Graduation Rates: What percentage of students go on to graduate or professional schools?

### **Student Environment**

1. Student Body: How would you describe a ‘typical’ student?
2. Geographical Diversity: Is the college regional, or does it attract students from all over the US? Are there international students?
3. Ethnic Diversity: What percentage of students are considered students of color? How well does the institution address issues that concern students of color?
4. Athletic Programs: In which division does the college compete? Are there equally strong programs for men and women? Does the school offer a variety of intercollegiate and intramural sports programs?
5. Social Life: Is there a wide range of social activities? What do students do on a typical Saturday night? Or Wednesday night? How important are fraternities and sororities?

## ***RESEARCH: SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLEGES***

There are many sources of information on colleges. The type of information available from these different sources is as varied as the sources themselves. Do your college investigation homework with the help of the following:

**Counselors:** We are available to help you weigh the pluses and minuses of different colleges and can help steer you in the direction of schools that might be good matches.

**LIHSA graduates and other current students:** Perhaps the best source of information on a college is someone who is a student there now.

**College admissions publications:** Colleges and universities spend millions of dollars each year on the production of literature designed to inform you and educate you about their institutions. The view books are slick, photo filled marketing tools designed to show you what the campus is really like. The text is brief, but most view books list programs available at the school as well as its activities and organizations. They also contain practical information on the admission procedure, as well as financial aid information. Many view books have applications inserted in them.

**Writing for your own information:** If you have not already, you will be receiving literature from many colleges and universities who have purchased your name and address from any one of a number of sources. Chances are, however, there are other schools about which you will want to learn more. More and more students are using e-mail to communicate directly with colleges and through your internet access at school or at home, you can do the same.

**Guidebooks:** There are many college guidebooks available at bookstores. The guidebooks fall into two main categories: **objective** or comparative guides, and **subjective** or ranking guides. The first type includes such books as those published by Peterson's, Barron's, Lovejoy's, Arco, and the College Handbook by the College Board. Most of the information included in these guides was obtained directly by the publishers from the admission offices. They provide quick reference information and a lot of statistics. Be careful! Statistics can be manipulated to suit the needs of the person or institution presenting them. The subjective guides include those by Fiske, the Yale Daily News, Rugg, William Buckley, Princeton Review, Kaplan and *Student's Guide to Colleges*. When reading these guides and reviewing the manner in which they rate various aspects of the institutions they are discussing, keep in mind that you are reading the opinions of only a few people. On the other hand, even though the information will be two or three years old, it is possible to read several such descriptions and put together a good idea of what life at the school might be like.

**Online:** Most colleges and universities have websites. What you will find on the pages will vary greatly from college to college, but typically you will find the most current and detailed information available about the school and its application procedures. Some sites include "virtual" tours, and others allow you to apply electronically to the institution. Most sites have some sort of e-mail link to communicate directly with the admission office.

**College Fairs:** Each fall, the Long Island High School for the Arts sponsors a College Fair for students and their parents. The fair is planned for the evening of **Wednesday, November 13th**. Representatives from many colleges and universities will attend the college fair, providing an excellent opportunity for students and their parents to gain first-hand information about colleges of interest to them.

**College representative visits at LIHSA:** Each year colleges and universities send admission representatives to LIHSA to speak with students and answer their questions. The presentations are convenient way for students to establish contact with an admission office and to learn more about the school and its application procedures from someone working there. The meetings are also a good chance for you to learn more about schools about which you might know very little. You should attend at least a couple of meetings just to find out what they are like and to hear what an admission officer has to say to prospective applicants. One added benefit to the meetings is that in many cases, the representative will be one of the people who will be reading your application, and then contributing to the decisions made by the admission office. It is definitely to your advantage if that person gets to know you as a person rather than as just another application. Arrive at the meetings on time and with at least some knowledge of the school so that you can ask informed, intelligent questions and make a good impression.

**Interest:** A word about the amount of interest you show in a college: Just about every college will keep track of how much interest you are showing in that school. They know how many times you have requested information in writing or by phone, they know if you spoke with a representative at a college fair or at a meeting at LIHSA, and they know if you have been asked to complete information cards for an admissions office – on that campus or elsewhere – do it again. Also, remember that the more personal you can make the process, the better it can work in your favor. Get to know someone in the admission office – that person could be an important advocate for you later.

## ***RESEARCH: CAMPUS VISITS***

Before you become too serious about attending any school, it is very important that you spend some time there to “get a feel for the place.” Spring break, summer vacation, and weekends are good times for you to visit campuses, and you should do so with your family at those times. All admission offices offer campus tours and information sessions for prospective students. Call in advance or check the website to find out when they are scheduled. Plan to spend half a day on campus, and if possible, walk around on your own.

You should try to revisit those schools in which you are most interested at a time when classes are in session. Most college admission offices will arrange for you to spend a night in a dorm, attend classes, and eat in the cafeteria.

When visiting a college, try to simulate as best you can what life there will be like. How large are the freshman classes? Do you like the food? The dorms? What information can you learn from the flyers posted around campus? The school newspaper? How are people dressed? How far do you have to walk to get to classes? Do the people walking around look happy? Consider the questions that you devised for colleges after your self-evaluation, and see what answers you get.

Visit campuses with a critical eye and do your homework on the school before you go. How does it measure up?

### ***MORE TIPS TO MAKE THE MOST OF COLLEGE VISITS***

Once you have completed some preliminary research on colleges, you ought to have a good idea of which ones merit further investigation - i.e. a visit. Visiting college campuses is crucial for two reasons:

1. You are able to gain a feel for the campus, students, academic departments, and areas that interest you specifically.
2. You can demonstrate your interest in the school, and simultaneously apply the homework you have done prior to your visit.

When you're visiting a school, your goal ought to be to balance the impressions you have gained from your preliminary research with your own personal instincts. In other words, don't believe everything that you read or hear, but use the information to guide you towards asking the right questions in the limited time that you have on any given campus. Be tactful, but ask good questions of the right people at each school you visit. That might mean setting up a meeting with someone in the Theatre Department, the Music Department, etc. Whoever it is, make the most of your visit and let people know that you are interested.

### **When to Plan Your College Visits**

The best way to gain a gut feeling about a school is to visit it when the students are in session. Unfortunately, since you are also enrolled as a student, this is not always possible. Do your best to visit when you can see the students, sit in on a lecture, meet faculty members from the departments in which you are interested, etc. You should certainly call the schools on your list to determine their school calendar and if/when they offer interviews, here are several blocks of time during which you and your family could consider visiting schools:

### **Maximizing Your College Visits**

While it is possible to have a successful college weekend with very little poor planning, the best way to make the most of your visit is to plan ahead. If you're going to visit schools with your parent(s), make sure you sit down with your parents to plan a calendar of visits. Your parents most likely want to help you in this process in every way that they can. Ask them for advice about calling schools, or ask them to help you set up appointments. Of course, it's best if you do most of the legwork yourself, because you will appreciate the effort that went into your visit and learn more in the long run. Here are a few thoughts to get you going on planning your visit and setting up meetings with the appropriate people:

- a) Plan to spend at least half a day at the school.
- b) Call the admissions office to arrange if they offer interviews on campus. If they don't, schedule an alumni interview in your hometown.
- c) Incorporate one of the school's general information sessions into your day.

- d) Call departments in which you are specifically interested and let them know that you are coming and ask whether you might meet with them. Remember, this is a time for you to continue your research into the academic departments as well as to establish contacts.
- e) Contact any friends/acquaintances/LIHSA alumni you know at the school and try to meet them for coffee or lunch. These are frequently the best sources for the inside scoop, but remember to maintain your objectivity and form your own opinion.

## **Etiquette During and After Your Visit**

When you visit a school, remember that you are representing both yourself and LIHSA. In other words, act naturally but remember that what you do or say may ultimately impact your standing in the admissions office. You will never understand the complexities of each school's network, so assume that everyone you meet is in some way connected to the admissions process and treat them with due respect. This means dressing appropriately for your visit and conducting yourself in a positive manner: from your initial handshake, to your undivided attention, to your parting thanks and gracious goodbye. Remember, you have requested to spend time with their staff, so make the most of the opportunity.

### **After Your Visit**

It is always a good idea to send a thank you note if you met with anyone individually or had an interview. While this note may wind up in your admissions file, at some point along the way, the best reason for doing so reverts to basic rules of courtesy. Especially, with the ease of e-mail, a brief note is an effortless way to show your appreciation for someone having spent time with you.

### **Make Every Piece of Communication Count**

Whenever you contact the admissions offices at the schools to which you are applying, assume that your phone call, e-mail, letter, or fax is recorded and added to your file. Make it concise, polished, and something that accurately conveys your character and persona.

If you have questions about potentially meaningful addenda to your application, consult your college counselor.

### **Enough is Enough**

Remember to keep your correspondence with a college at an appropriate level. Use your judgement or ask your counselor to help you determine what 'appropriate' might be, in your case. Do not barrage an admissions office with daily letters, phone calls, or e-mail. Do make sure that your correspondence is meaningful, memorable, and well presented.

### **Getting Organized**

After each visit, you ought to consider recording your impressions in either a journal or on a checklist. Write down the names of all the people you meet and anecdotes that will help you remember who they are and what they do. What sort of feeling did you get from the school?

How was the music department? Was the campus appealing to you? Could you imagine yourself there for four years? Keep in mind that your visit gives you a one snapshot impression; don't overreact to a poor tour. Keep copies of your correspondence with every school you are considering. The best way to this is to start a file on each school as you begin your preliminary research and add to it as the process evolves. You never know when you might need to reference postcard that you sent to a director of admissions! Keep track of everything that you send.

**Other tips for campus visits:**

- Wear comfortable shoes. Campuses are big.
- Ask in advance if it is possible for you to meet with a financial aid officer.
- Seek out facilities that are of special interest to you but may not be on the tour. You may even find a professor willing to chat with you. Ask for a campus map in the admissions office.
- Read everything.
- Talk to students. This may seem like a daunting prospect, but the information and the sense of the school that you will gain are worth it. Strike up conversations in the dorms or common areas. Be ready with a few questions that are important to you.



# WHAT DO COLLEGES LOOK FOR

## *THE BIG PICTURE*

You have looked at the colleges. Now you want to know how they will be looking at you. Once again, it is important to see this process from the larger perspective.

The more selective schools to which LIHSA students typically apply receive many, many more applications from qualified students than they can possibly accept. This means that these colleges are denying admission to “acceptable” students, many with high SAT scores and near-perfect grade point averages.

Most admission offices think not in terms of a large applicant “pool”, but in terms of many smaller applicant “puddles”, all of which have their demanding college constituencies. High grades and test scores mean better statistics in the next issue of U.S. News and World Report. The coaches are looking for good athletes. The band director needs a new clarinet player. The development office is reviewing the applicants for hidden fortunes. The college is looking to increase ethnic diversity. The college is looking for applicants from each and every state. Perhaps you are applying to a college one of your parents attended. You will be put into a special pool. The examples of divergence from the “usual” process could go on and on.

Although there are special factors in the process, the following elements in your application are considered at most colleges. Most of these are discussed in more detail on the following pages.

- High school performance (most important)
- High school course selection
- Academic rigor of high school and relative performance of students
- Scores on standardized tests
- Out-of-class activities
- Application essay(s)
- Recommendations
- Auditions/Portfolio reviews
- Interviews

## *YOUR TRANSCRIPT*

Your transcript is the single most important part of your application to any college. The following information can be found on your transcript.

### **Where you are attending high school.**

**The courses you have taken.** The curriculum within your high school and at LIHSA is fairly set your first several years. Everyone takes a similar course load through junior year. Colleges take notice of accelerated and unique schedules.

**The courses you are taking in your senior year.** The courses you take in your senior year play an important role in your possible admission to certain colleges, especially the more selective ones.

**The grades that you have earned.** Yes, colleges want students who have done well in high school. Colleges do look back to your freshman and sophomore years. Your junior year grades, however, being the most recent, receive a more careful review. When your first semester senior year grades are placed on your transcript and then sent to the colleges to which you are applying, those grades get an even more careful review.

In most cases, the grades you have earned and the courses you have taken will determine the schools to which you have a reasonable chance of admissions. You can see what kind of student you have been by reviewing your grades just like an admission officer can. Are you an average student, a poor student, an exceptional student? Late bloomers are not necessarily doomed. Admissions offices notice trends, both up and down. Have your grades been getting better with each quarter. Unless you have applied early somewhere, colleges do not see your quarter grades or your exam grades, unless you request to have your first quarter senior year grades sent.

## ***SENIOR COURSE SELECTION***

In your senior year you have the greatest flexibility in selecting your courses, and the college admission offices will be paying attention to your choices. Specifically, you are able to choose from courses of relatively greater or lesser academic challenge. The colleges like to see students who challenge themselves. They like to see that you are taking advantage of all your school has to offer.

The rule of thumb is this: challenge yourself as much as you can, given the courses that are offered to you. Take senior year courses that are appropriate to your academic record, abilities and interest. Challenge, but do not overwhelm yourself.

## ***SAT***

The SATs are taken by college-bound students. They are administered by the College Board, a national non-profit testing agency. They may be taken more than once, and are usually taken for the first time at the end of your junior year. Taking the test twice is the common practice; to take it more than two times is excessive and unnecessary. While some colleges consider your highest total score as your best, most colleges will use your highest scores as a composite, even if they were earned at two different sittings. All SAT test registration can be done directly through [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

## ***SAT II***

The SAT II test is specific subject tests. The tests are designed to measure your knowledge or skill in a particular subject area and to apply that knowledge or skill. The tests are curriculum-based, so it is much easier to study for them than it is for the SAT.

## ***ACT***

The ACT is an alternative college admission test. Because the ACT is curriculum-based, some students tend to score a little higher on it. More information about the ACT can be obtained by logging onto [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

## ACT vs. SAT

	ACT	SAT
<b>Tests</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. English</li> <li>2. Math</li> <li>3. Reading</li> <li>4. Science</li> <li>5. Optional Writing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Math</li> <li>2. Evidence-Based Reading &amp; Writing</li> <li>3. Optional Essay</li> </ol>
<b>Scoring</b>	<p>1 to 36 for each test, averaged together for a composite score of 1 to 36.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STEM score based on Math and Science Reasoning.</li> <li>• English language score</li> <li>• “Progress Toward Career Readiness” score</li> <li>• “Text Complexity Progress Indicator”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composite score (400-1600)</li> <li>• 2 test scores for Math and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (200-800 each)</li> <li>• 3 sub-test scores (10-40)</li> <li>• 7 sub-scores (1-15)</li> <li>• 2 cross-test scores</li> </ul>
<b>Length</b>	<p>3 hours (without essay) 3 hours, 30 minutes (with essay)</p>	<p>3 hours (without essay) 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay)</p>
<b>Wrong Answer Penalty</b>	None	None
<b>Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper and pencil</li> <li>• ACT is testing a computer-based option for district-wide in-school testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper and pencil</li> <li>• College Board is developing a computer-based option</li> </ul>
<b>Reading Content</b>	<p>The Reading Test measures reading comprehension. You’ll read several passages and answer questions that show your understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is directly stated</li> <li>• Statements with implied meanings</li> </ul>	<p>Reading Test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No more sentence completions</li> <li>• Passages drawn from historical or scientific documents</li> <li>• May include information graphics</li> </ul>
<b>Grammar Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctuation</li> <li>• Parts of speech</li> <li>• Conventional usage of English</li> <li>• 10-15 grammar rules tested on passages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctuation</li> <li>• Parts of speech</li> <li>• Conventional usage of English</li> <li>• 10-15 grammar rules tested on passages</li> <li>• Some questions will involve graphics</li> </ul>
<b>Math Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arithmetic</li> <li>• Algebra I</li> <li>• Geometry</li> <li>• Algebra II</li> <li>• Trigonometry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application-based, multi-step questions</li> <li>• Higher-level math, including trigonometry</li> <li>• One “extended-thinking” grid-in questions (worth 4 pts.)</li> <li>• Core math competencies</li> </ul>
<b>The Essay</b>	<p>The essay is optional (30 minutes timed). Write about perspectives on an issue relevant to high school students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate and analyze multiple perspectives on complex issue</li> <li>• Scores in 4 areas: ideas and analysis, development and support, organization and language use</li> </ul>	<p>The essay is optional (50 minutes, timed)</p> <p>Analyze an author of a substantial passage (600-700 words) builds and argument</p>

## *A FINAL WORD ON TESTING*

How important are your test scores? That depends on where you are applying. College guidebooks and admission materials often indicate an average score for students. Keep in mind that this is an average, not a minimum. More schools have moved to the reporting of their scores as ranges for the middle 50% of their students. This information is usually more helpful and a lot less intimidating. If your test scores are within the college's range, their relative importance, when compared to other parts of your application, decreases.

College admission officers are fully aware that some students do not “test well.” Slow reading speed, unfamiliarity with the test format, or simple fear may cause a student to perform poorly on standardized tests. For these reasons, test scores are usually reviewed in the context of all other parts of the student's application.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

### *THE FINAL LIST*

In the fall of your senior year, you will finalize your list of schools and complete your application. After working through the process previously outlined in this handbook – self-evaluation, research, and campus visit – you will come up with a list of schools to which you want to apply. Your final list should include about 10 schools, a mix of public and private choices, any of which you would be happy to attend. You may also decide to focus on a single school.

For most students the final list of schools includes three types:

- “Reach” schools – colleges you would like to attend but for which you do not quite ‘fit’ the profile of a typically accepted student, or for which you ‘fit’ but the school is so selective that it turns away many ‘qualified’ applicants;
- “Possible” schools, where your chance of acceptance is more reasonable in that you ‘have what they are looking for’ or exceed the averages, but where a good number of qualified students are not accepted;
- “Likely” schools where your chance of getting admitted is very likely: you fit the profile and most qualified applicants are accepted (“safer schools”).

Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a guarantee or a sure-shot acceptance for anyone. Also, you should not apply to a “reach” school that is too much of a reach if the academic environment you would face there would be overwhelming or burdensome. And be sure that every school to which you apply meets **YOUR** criteria. You should not go through all of the work of applying to a school just to see if you can get accepted, or to find out how many colleges will accept you, if you have no intention of attending. You can only attend one college.

## *COMPLETING AN APPLICATION*

Plan ahead! The application forms used by colleges and universities vary a great deal. Some ask for little more than basic biographical and academic information on one side of a piece of paper while others can be several pages long. Regardless of the form it takes, the application is the primary tool the admission offices use to collect information from you. The questions asked and the credentials required tell you a lot about the school, and the answers you provide tell the school a lot about you.

Completing applications takes time, a lot of time if you are going to do a good job. You should know that even the mechanics of the completion of the application form is a significant “sorter” for the admission office. A sloppy, incomplete or late application sends a very clear message to the college, whether that was your intention or not. The college will favor the applicants who have taken time with their application, followed directions, and presented themselves in the best possible manner.

You should answer all of the questions asked on the applications honestly. List your accomplishments and activities as requested. Some students find that attaching an easy-to-read resume is easier than trying to make your information fit within certain boxes or on lines. If you attach anything additional to your application, however, be certain that you have followed the instructions on that application very carefully. The basic information from most applications is transferred into a computer file when it is received, and not having the necessary information in the appropriate place at the time of entry into the program could be detrimental.

Have your completed application proofread and be certain that it is neat and clean. Do not rely on others to do your typing. Before mailing any application, you should make a copy of it to keep for your records.

## *OTHER SUPPORTING MATERIALS*

Should you send extra materials along with your applications? In some cases, it is suggested, or even required. For example, talented artists usually submit portfolios of their work, especially when applying to art programs. If not requested, should you still send extras? It depends on whether or not your extra material will add something significant to your application. Does it present you in an exceptional way? Keep in mind the amount of material received by college admission offices.

## *THE COMMON APPLICATION*

The Common Application can be downloaded at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). Once you have completed the Common Application, you may send it to as many of the participating institutions as you wish. Of course, the appropriate application fees must be sent along with each copy of the Common Application. Some schools that accept the Common Application require you provide supplemental information, and this is usually outlined on a second form which you can provide a list of what each specific institution accepting the Common Application requires, including supplements and fees.

Many students wonder whether or not the use of the Common Application will indicate to the college a lack of interest on the part of the student. If the student were interested in that school, wouldn't he request and use the school's own application form? In fact, each school participating in the Common Application group has agreed not to view the Common Application any differently than they would their own application. Many of the schools' own applications are actually Common Applications with that school's name imprinted on the forms.

## ***APPLICATION DEADLINES AND RELATED TERMS***

It is critical that you know the application deadlines for the schools to which you are applying. To apply late usually elicits the same response as not applying at all. Below are some important terms used in the application and admission process by most colleges and universities. It is important that you understand them and the differences between them.

**Application Deadline.** In the application literature for each college you will find a date by which all application materials are due. In some cases, the date will be a postmark date, and in others it will be a date by which all materials must be received. If this is not specified, you should assume that all materials must be received by the date indicated.

**Candidate (or Applicant) Notification Date.** This is the date by which you will receive a decision, or the date by which the decisions will be mailed from the school. Notification dates for the more competitive schools are usually in late March and early April.

**Rolling Admissions.** Some schools will review your application as soon as all supporting materials have been received. You will receive your decision within six weeks of receipt of your application materials by the admission office. When a school has a Rolling Admission policy, there may not be a set application deadline; rather, applications are usually accepted within a certain time period, as long as there are spaces in the freshman class. At some of the more selective colleges with rolling admissions, it is advisable that you apply by October or November of your senior year. At some institutions with rolling admissions, Honors Programs and/or scholarship competitions may have earlier deadlines.

**Candidate's Reply Date.** The date of May 1 has been accepted by most colleges and universities in the United States as the date by which all admitted students must inform the school they are planning on attending of their intention to enroll. A non-refundable deposit is usually due by this date. Submitting your reply or deposit after May 1 will jeopardize your acceptance and place in the freshmen class. In addition to notifying the school you will attend of your intentions, you are also obligated to notify all other schools to which you have been accepted of your plans not to attend. Sending a deposit to more than one college is not ethical and will jeopardize your acceptances at each of the schools involved.

## *APPLYING EARLY*

Many students like the idea of applying to colleges early, and having the process completed by December vacation. Applying early might, in fact, be a good idea for some students, but always discuss your options with your counselor. Below is an explanation of some of the terms used to describe the various ways of applying early:

**Early Decision.** Application deadlines for Early Decision I plans are usually in November. A few colleges offer Early Decision II with application deadlines falling at the end of December or early January. A student who applies to a school under an Early Decision plan must sign a contract (as do his/her parents and counselor) which states that the student will attend that school if accepted. He/She also states that he/she will withdraw any and all other applications submitted to other schools and that he/she will not submit any others. Applying to a school Early Decision is a serious and binding commitment.

Students applying early are reviewed on the basis of their performance through junior year, so the Early Decision option is usually advisable only for students with very good academic records. Responses for Early Decision applicants are usually received before the winter holiday vacation of the senior year, and they may be acceptance, denial, or deferral to the regular spring applicant pool. A student may apply to only one school as an Early Decision candidate, and he/she should be sure that this is the school he/she would like to attend. If you are interested in applying as an Early Decision applicant, it is important to discuss all of the considerations with your counselor soon after senior year begins.

**Early Action.** This is a decision plan similar to that described above, but the important difference is that your acceptance is not binding. Most Early Action deadlines are in November and December, and you will usually receive a decision before December break. You will have until the May 1 Candidate's Reply Date, however, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan. Decisions under this plan are made primarily on the basis of your performance through junior year. It is usually more difficult to get accepted under an Early Action plan than it is through the regular admission process in the spring.

## *EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES*

Many times in this handbook, you will read that your academic record will be the single most important determining factor in your admission decisions. However, your grades and test scores do not reflect everything about you. Your involvement in out-of-class activities might reveal special talents, such as your music ability or artistic talents. Your problem-solving skills, organizational abilities, leadership skills and maturity are often demonstrated through your involvement in activities. Drive and initiative, and dedication to some service activity above and beyond what is required are all attractive to the admission office.

Selective colleges look for students who will bring something special to their campuses. What are you going to contribute to that community? Chances are that if you were involved in activities in high school, you will continue to be involved in college. Remember, however, that the colleges will



not be impressed by a long laundry list of activities and club memberships. Rather, they are impressed by some of the qualities described above, such as dedication and commitment, accomplishment and recognition, and movement into positions of leadership and increased responsibility. What do your activities – in school and out – say about you?

## *THE ESSAY*

The application essay is probably the most dreaded part of the application for the student. Most selective schools require at least one, and sometimes several, essays.

Imagine all of the parts of your application on a table before an admissions officer: your application, your transcript, your test scores, your recommendations. Think of your essay as being that part of your application which transforms your file from a collection of bits of information into a real person. The essay is a chance for you to make your application come alive. Especially at smaller and medium sized schools, the students who uses the essay to present a lively, honest, and self-motivated image is improving his/her chances for admission.

Above all else, admission offices are looking for honesty, openness, directness and sincerity in your essays. You should not feel that you have to come up with something unusual or tragic. You must focus on how you want **YOUR** story to be told, and be your authentic self. You should not try to give the reader what you think he or she wants. You should not use language with which you are not usually comfortable.

What should you do when writing your essays? Make sure you understand the question you are answering and answer it. Do not give one school the answer to an essay for another school unless the questions are exactly the same. Give yourself ample time to write good essays. Write a first draft and then put it away for a couple of days. Take it out and revise it. Put it away again. Polish it and then have your counselor read it, for both content and grammatical and spelling errors. A sloppily written essay is an easy death for any applicant. Remember your audience and be sure to show, not just tell. Remember that longer does not necessarily mean better. If you are asked to keep your response within a certain space, do not exceed that space.

Be careful about getting too much help on your essays. It will show and it will spell doom if the reader gets the impression that the work is not your own. Someone who reads hundreds (or thousands) of them will be able to tell. Write your own essays!

### **Some considerations in writing your essay:**

- Leave yourself time – for thinking, for note taking, for mapping ideas, for reviewing.
- Be clear and direct, your essay might only be read very quickly at one time. You don't want the reader to have to work to understand what you are trying to say in your essay. Ask yourself, "what does the reader learn about me from this essay?"
- Write about something money can't buy: Feelings, ideas, reflections, reactions.
- Keep a journal of some of your responses to the experiences you have and use these jottings later to give you ideas for essays.
- Trust your words, write what you want from the inside.



## *THE COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS*

### 2019-2020 Common Application Essay Prompts

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma – anything that is personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

## *THE PRE-SCREEN*

The pre-screen is a pre-audition, particularly useful when a large number of applicants is expected. It's a way for a college or university to start making a shortlist of applicants who might be right for the spot within the department, and saving the Department Chairs and faculty time by only making them sit through auditions of applicants who actually have a shot.

### **Tips for the pre-screen**

**Every school or program has its own requirements. It's your job to know what they are.**

Carefully check all the requirements for sending pre-screens and recorded auditions for each school or program where you're applying. Go over the details more than once. Make no assumptions -- what works for one school may not work at all for another. The schools have no mercy when it comes to students misreading their requirements.

**Pay attention to deadlines.** Most schools currently state December 1st as the pre-screen deadline but be sure that's the correct date for each school you're applying to. Note that these deadlines are firm and if a pre-screen is required and you miss the deadline, you won't be invited for a live audition.

**Don't leave your recordings for the last minute.** Practice and hone the music you'll be submitting well before the deadlines. A number of things can go wrong with the recording so plan ahead, figure

out what you're going to record with, get your questions answered, and fix any problems in enough time to meet the deadlines.

**Create a recording you'll be proud of.** Your recording may be the schools' first impression of you, and it may be your only chance to show them something about who you are, what you can do, and why you deserve a chance to become their student. Really good sound quality is essential.

**Live vs. recorded auditions?** Schools that require pre-screens expect you to send recordings. The pre-screen information on their websites will indicate how they want you to do this -- through an upload company such as Acceptd, DecisionDesk, Slide Room, or through the mail.

If you make it through pre-screens, you'll need to decide whether to audition live on campus, live at a regional audition site if available, or through a recorded audition.

## *THE AUDITION*

The audition is an important part in determining your acceptance into a college or university. Below are some tips to help you as you prepare to go through the audition process:

**Do your homework.** Every college program is unique, and the judges want to see that you're a good fit for their program. Spend time in the weeks leading up to your audition learning all you can about the college and its program and types of courses offered. Research the faculty, know who you are talking to, and who will be teaching you. Knowing this kind of information will prove useful in the interview phase of your audition.

**Devote time to preparing for your audition.** To make sure that you're truly showcasing all that you have to offer, prepare and practice far in advance of the audition. Select and develop audition repertoire as far as possible.

**Be aware of all requirements.** Be sure to observe the audition requirements indicated on the college's website that is specific to your program. Choose repertoire that is appropriate to your level of expertise. An easier piece performed well will be more successful than a more difficult piece performed poorly. Make sure that your audition piece is appropriate for the program you are auditioning for.

**Pay attention to deadlines.** Submit all application materials in as far in advance of your audition as possible. Observe ALL deadlines carefully. Schedule your audition as early as possible in the school year.

**Pay attention to your selection.** Choose something to begin your audition that you feel comfortable with. You will probably be most nervous at the beginning of your audition, so start with something you are most confident with. Your audition piece does not need to be your favorite song, dance, or monologue. It needs to be the piece that shows all your ability.

**Create a to do list for the day of your audition.** Make sure to bring a copy of your resume for the faculty panel, even if you have already submitted one with your application, and multiple copies and formats of your solo music. If you are auditioning for a theatre program have

a separate binder with just your audition material in it. Pack quick and healthy snacks for the long day of audition, and stay hydrated.

**Try to relax in the days leading up to your audition.** Don't over practice in the days immediately preceding your audition. You want to make sure you are at your strongest.

**Remember...** Your audition begins the moment you enter the audition room, not just when you begin performing your audition piece. Dress professionally, speak confidently and respectfully, smile and make eye contact with the adjudicators.

## *THE UNIFIED AUDITIONS*

The Unified Auditions allow students to audition for numerous college and university programs in one location over the course of a few days. This saves the student time and money and also allows the university to hear a wider range of students than they otherwise may see on campus. Below are this year's dates and schools in attendance.

There are some great advantages to attending these auditions: You can travel to one central destination; save major money on travel; save time for yourself and your parents; meet other students from around the United States and get a feel for how you compare.

There are also some major disadvantages. The universities are trying to fit in a large number of people in a short time, so you may not get as much attention as in on-campus auditions; you don't get to see the campus to see if it's a good fit for you; you have no opportunity to meet the current students; you miss an opportunity to meet other faculty and staff.

However, you could always make a campus visit after you're accepted. There is no "right" answer as to if participating in The Unified Auditions is the best way to audition. You can only decide what works best for you and your family.

For more information, please visit <http://nuaregistration.com/>

## *THE INTERVIEW*

The interview is a time in the application process when the student experiences some anxiety. There is a big difference between dropping an essay in the mail and sitting five feet from someone looking at you in the face. Being nervous is expected and understandable, but the truth is, there is little to be nervous about. It would take a lot of work to "blow" an interview completely. Unless you are very shy and uncomfortable, they almost always will work in your favor. Any personal contact you have with a representative from the admission office strengthens your application and makes it more "real". Take advantage of your interviews and get one whenever you can. There are several different types of interviews.

**Alumni Interviews.** Many colleges, so overwhelmed by the numbers of applicants in recent years, have stopped offering interviews by members of their admission staffs. Instead, the schools farm out their interviews to trained alumni who live in our area. For some colleges, this is a

required part of the application process and for others it is an option. The alumnus will usually contact you a couple of weeks after your application is received by the admission office. Meetings often take place at local coffee shops or other public places. Approach these interviews as conversations. Take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about the school. If you can manage to keep the control of the conversation, then you leave yourself less open to feeling out of control. Some interviews will have a list of questions which they are expected to ask. Whether they say the interview will “count” or not, you can be sure that your interviewer will send a report back to the school and that this report will become a part of your application file.

**On-Campus Personal Interviews.** If it is possible, getting a personal interview with an admission officer is the most desired type of interview. These are conducted in the admission office and usually take about 45 minutes. While the interview is a chance for you to learn more about the school through hearing about it and asking questions, the primary purpose of this type of interview is evaluative. Even so, if the interview develops into a relaxed conversation, this is usually a good sign. Remember that it is alright to politely express a difference of opinion or to say that you do not know something if you do not. These interviews are usually evaluative.

**For any type of interview, you should keep the following points in mind:**

- Schedule your interview well enough in advance if you are seeking one at the school.
- Do your homework before the interview. Review the school’s literature and know the basics about the institution.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before your scheduled interview time so that you are not rushed or late.
- Dress neatly and cleanly. If in doubt, dress conservatively. Do not try to overly impress with your appearance.
- During the interview, be honest; be **YOURSELF**. Listen and take time to reflect.
- Try to be energetic and enthusiastic. Make eye contact and use a firm handshake.
- Know the name of the person who interviewed you and send a brief thank-you note within a few days of your interview.
- Express yourself well and clearly and demonstrate self-confidence and maturity.

## ***TEACHER RECOMMENDATION***

Many colleges will ask that you have a teacher write a letter of recommendation on your behalf. Some ask for more than one teacher recommendation, and some even specify teachers of specific subjects. You should give careful consideration to your selection of the teachers you will ask to write letters for you. The teachers you choose should know you well. Teachers from junior and senior year are usually preferred, as are teachers of “core” academic subjects like Math, English, History, and Science. If you indicate a particular major or field of interest on your application, you should have letters which support that interest. Choose teachers from different disciplines: colleges want to know that you have more than one academic strength. Ask for recommendations from teachers in whose classes you have done well and who know you.

Be organized. Give the teacher the forms with deadlines highlighted or clearly noted by you. More information on the procedure will be provided in the fall. Be certain to provide all the necessary information about your college list and goals to those teachers you are requesting recommendation letters from.

Never ask a teacher to write a recommendation for you when there is not ample time to do so properly. After all of your letters have been written, thank the teachers who have written for you. When you get responses from the schools in the spring, let the teachers who have written for you know what the decisions are.

### ***THE LIHSA ADVANTAGE***

Students who attend the Long Island High School for the Arts will be matched with the best performing and fine arts colleges for their individual needs. Your counselor will provide individualized guidance and instruction on the college application process, initiate parent-teacher-student conferences when necessary, consult with teachers and visiting lecturers on appropriate post-secondary options for each student, and help students be fully prepared for their college auditions.

Students will be provided with the necessary information regarding college pre-screening and audition procedures and dates, and your counselor will consult with your teachers and visiting lecturers on audition preparation information.

In addition, your counselor at LIHSA will help you coordinate your overall college application with your academic high school:

- Students should receive an unofficial copy of their transcript from their Guidance Counselor in their respective district.
  - \* *Make sure to go over your transcript to ensure that everything is accurate! Report any errors to your counselor immediately.*
- ALL official transcripts are sent directly to the colleges from the Guidance/Registrar Office.
- Mid-year report cards are sent in February to all schools to which students have applied.
- ALL LIHSA courses and grades will be reported on your high school transcript.
- ALL LIHSA seniors must fill out a PINK SHEET.

The **LIHSA PINK Sheet** is a form that all seniors must fill out during their Fall Semester. The PINK Sheet indicates all of the schools in which a student is considering applying to; students will list the names and addresses to all of these schools. Once the PINK Sheet is completed, it is then kept on file and all of your LIHSA records are sent to the schools accordingly.

# FINANCIAL AID

With the total costs of many private colleges now exceeding \$45,000 per year, financial aid is a topic on the minds of an increasing number of people. Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind regarding financial aid is this: You will not know whether or not you qualify for assistance, and you will not receive any aid, if you do not apply. It is not uncommon for more than half of the students at some very well-known schools to be receiving some type of financial assistance.

There are basically two different types of financial assistance offered by colleges and universities: need-based and merit-based.

## *NEED-BASED ASSISTANCE*

Every school will require that you submit the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** in order to be considered for aid. The FAFSA is available online in October. Many schools will also ask you to complete the CSS Profile (also known as the Financial Aid Profile), a second form available in the early fall and with which you must send a processing fee. Both forms are submitted to processors who then calculate your expected family contribution and forward that information to you and to any schools to which you have asked the information be sent. The FAFSA calculations are based on federally legislated methodology. The CSS/Financial Aid Profile calculations take additional discretionary information into account, as requested by the various schools to which you are applying.

Some colleges ask that applicants for financial aid submit the school's own financial aid form directly to the school, in addition to the FAFSA, and sometimes the CSS/Financial Aid Profile as well. If this is the case for a school to which you are applying, be attentive to deadlines and provide complete information. Some colleges will want only the FAFSA, some will want the FAFSA, CSS/Financial Aid Profile, and an institutional form, others will want the FAFSA and an institutional form, and still others will want the FAFSA and CSS/Financial Aid Profile. When applying for any type of financial aid, it is important to be accurate and prompt in filing all of your forms.

The Financial Aid Office at each institution will take the information provided by the form processor and put together a financial aid 'package' which might be some combination of **grant, scholarship, loan, and/or work study**. Unfortunately, an increasing number of colleges are not able to meet 100% of the demonstrated need of their applicant. That means there might be a 'gap' between what you can afford and what the college can provide to assist you.

**Grants and scholarships** are monies given to you by the college which do not have to be repaid. The **Pell Grant** is the largest of the federal grant programs. Determination is made on the basis of information provided by review of your FAFSA. The **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)** is another federal program (administered by the colleges) for students with exceptional need.

**Loans** must be repaid and have different terms. **The Stafford Loan** is a federal program (administered by private lenders) based on need. The loan is interest-free while the student is in college and until repayment begins. The federal government pays interest while you are still in school and for six months afterwards. **Perkins Loans** are federally funded and are offered by the colleges. They are based on need. Interest is not paid while you are a student and for nine months of graduation. **Unsubsidized Stafford Loans** are designed for students who do not demonstrate need. The terms are the same as for the Stafford Loan described above, except that interest must be paid while the student is in college. Repayment principle begins upon graduation. **PLUS (Parents Loan to Undergraduate Students)** and **SLS (Supplemental Loan to Students) Loans** are also not based on financial need., but you usually must first apply for Pell and Stafford Loans before being considered. Both have yearly maximums. Interest accumulates while you are a student, but repayment can be deferred until graduation. The repayment periods are five to ten years.

**College Work Study** is employment which you must take while in school, earning a salary which you are expected to contribute toward your expenses. The program is administered by the colleges, and financial aid or work study office will help you find a job which qualifies. Most work study jobs are part-time and clerical in nature.

### ***MERIT-BASED ASSISTANCE***

A growing number of colleges and universities are making available scholarship money which is awarded not on the basis of need, but for some outstanding quality or accomplishment demonstrated by the student. The only way to learn of these awards is to seek them out: Check the literature you receive from schools to which you are applying and do a search on the web. Many privately-funded scholarships are also awarded each year, from businesses, associations, civic groups, corporations, and others.

**BEWARE!** Of individuals and firms which claim to be able to uncover hidden riches available for you to use for college. There are extensive, **FREE**, scholarship searches available on the web.

Check these web pages for a lot of free information on financial aid and free scholarships searches:

- [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
- [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

### ***FINANCIAL AID MYTHS***

**I won't attend college because it is just too expensive.** High tuition is not a requirement for a good education. Investigate the SUNY schools, where tuition, room and board are a great deal less than at private schools.

**I'm not an "A" student so I won't get any financial aid.** Most federal aid is based on financial need, and grades are not considered.

**I won't apply to private schools because my parents can't afford to send me.** Don't rule out attending a private college or university based solely on cost. Begin by researching schools



that fit your criteria, and when you have all the facts, then make your decision. Often private schools offer more financial aid than public ones. Remember higher college expenses also mean a better chance of showing financial need

## THICK ENVELOPE OR THIN

You will receive a response from each of the schools to which you have applied early in April. The goal is for students to have several colleges and financial aid packages from which to choose. Of course, the response you want to see is an acceptance; the feared response is the denial. The other response: the Wait List.

### *THE WAIT LIST*

All colleges accept a larger number of students than needed to fill their freshman classes. They know that most students apply to more than one school, and that most will be accepted by more than one. This means that every school will accept students who will turn down their offers of acceptance. College and universities place qualified students on their wait lists and accept students from the list if there is space in the class after the May 1 response date. In many cases, you will not be notified of your acceptance off the wait list until long after May 1, so you should proceed with notifying another school of your intention to enroll by May 1. If you are taken off the wait list at the school you wish to attend, you would have to forfeit the deposit made to the first school. If you find yourself dangling on a wait list, it is always a good idea to ask yourself, “How much is attending this one college really worth to me?”

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of students applying to the most selective colleges nationwide, which has impacted colleges’ ability to predict how many accepted students will choose to enroll in their college. This means that many colleges are increasing the use of the wait list as a way to avoid over or under enrollment. Should you be waitlisted at a college, you should meet with your counselor to discuss a potential plan of action. Colleges may have differing perspectives on how they see the wait list, but keep in mind that most colleges will want to see 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter grades as an additional tool for use in evaluating wait listed applicants.



# COLLEGE PROCESS TIMELINE

## Junior Year – Action Plan

August/September	October/November	December/January
<p>Start thinking about your interests, skills, and abilities. Relate them to possible career choices. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Talk to people who know you and get their input.</p> <p>Start discussing college options and financial considerations with your parents. This process is ongoing and will probably continue throughout the remainder of high school.</p> <p>Ask yourself what factors are important in selecting a college.</p> <p>Make a commitment to work hard.</p> <p>Grades count!</p> <p>Begin collecting dates of college fairs and parent nights taking place in your area.</p> <p>Register for the fall PSAT, an exam similar to the SAT. Scores are used to determine National Merit Scholars. Results will also give you some idea of how you will do on the SATs. (Scores do change, and test preparation courses can help!)</p> <p>Visit your guidance office. Become familiar with their college resources. Talk to your guidance counselor about where you want to go to college and the requirements for acceptance.</p>	<p>Do an online college search. Request college brochures and resources through the college website or by contacting the admissions office directly.</p> <p>If you intend to take the SATs, then make sure to register for PSATs in your junior year.</p> <p>Attend local college fairs. Collect view books, catalogs, and any other pertinent data. Start keeping a file of information.</p> <p>Talk with college reps visiting your school.</p> <p>Continue discussing your college search with a guidance counselor.</p> <p>Read and reread college brochures, catalogs and view books.</p> <p>Make a list of 10-12 colleges that meet your interests and requirements.</p> <p>Be mindful of all the important deadlines for each college. Note them on your calendar.</p> <p>Discuss PSAT results with college advisor. Identify weak test skills.</p> <p>Begin to learn about eligibility requirements for both federal, state, and local aid (grants, loans, and scholarships).</p> <p><b><u>FAFSA and CSS Filing is available beginning</u></b> <b><u>October 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>.</u></b></p>	<p>Become familiar with SAT and/or ACT exams. Know registration and test dates. Note them on your calendar.</p> <p>Find out about test preparation courses. Check college entrance requirements to see which test is necessary.</p> <p>Research any additional financial aid information, including scholarships. <b>FILE INFORMATION, and CIRCLE DEADLINE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR.</b></p> <p>Start scheduling college visits. During the winter months you might want to visit local colleges first.</p> <p>Attend any available workshops.</p> <p>If taking either the January or February SATs, make sure to register early.</p> <p>Schedule your junior conference.</p>

<p><b>February/March</b></p> <p>Familiarize yourself with the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and CSS Profile.</p> <p>If you have worked on a Career Plan, now is the time to review it.</p> <p>Put together preliminary drafts of activity sheets including academic achievement, sports participation, volunteer experiences, and work opportunities. They will help you when filling out the college admission forms and writing your essay.</p> <p>If taking the ACT or SATs offered in April of May, make sure to register.</p> <p>Continue attending college and financial aid fairs. Keep adding information to your file.</p> <p>Call college admissions offices to arrange for campus tours. When visiting, make sure to meet with an admissions rep and a financial aid officer. Ask pertinent questions based on your research.</p> <p>Start thinking about who you want to write your letters of recommendation. (Include teachers, employers and other important adults who can attest to your strengths.)</p>	<p><b>April/May</b></p> <p>Start comparing colleges and rank them in order of your preferences. A great web resource for self-assessment and college information is New York Career Zone, sponsored by the NY State Department of Labor.</p> <p><b><u><a href="http://www.nycareerzone.org">www.nycareerzone.org</a></u></b></p> <p>Continue investigating available scholarships including those offered by your church, organizations that your parents belong to, and civic or business groups in your area.</p> <p>Register if planning to take the June SATs or ACTs.</p> <p>Reduce the number of your college choices based on the features you have researched.</p> <p>Attend spring college fairs</p> <p>If you are interested in playing sports in college, register with NCAA clearing house.</p> <p><b><u><a href="http://www.ncaa.org">www.ncaa.org</a></u></b></p> <p>Try to obtain a summer job related to your career interests. If a job is unavailable, consider volunteer work.</p>	<p><b>June- Summer</b></p> <p>Visit colleges on your list that are not local.</p> <p>Contact private colleges for scholarship applications.</p> <p><b><u>Begin working on college applications and essays.</u></b> <b><u>Use your activity sheets.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Begin assembling writing sample, portfolios and/or audio materials!</u></b></p> <p><b>GET READY FOR A BUSY SENIOR YEAR!</b></p>
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## Senior Year - Action Plan

<b>Summer/September</b>	<b>October/November</b>	<b>December/January</b>
<p>Continue visiting colleges that most interest you. Obtain all necessary information and forms.</p> <p>Read literature thoroughly and visit college websites.</p> <p>Check your transcript. Make sure you have all the necessary credits needed to graduate and to be admitted to the colleges that interest you.</p> <p>Register for SAT and ACT tests.</p> <p>Review your college list. In considering college costs, think about public institutions as well as private ones.</p> <p>Ask your guidance counselor about specific application deadlines for scholarships and financial aid.</p> <p>Ask appropriate adults to write letters of recommendations for admission and scholarship applications. (Think about teachers, employers, guidance counselors and other adults who know you well.)</p> <p>Make certain all forms are filled out correctly.</p> <p>If your college applications require essays, now is the time to begin the writing process.</p>	<p>Make sure letters of recommendation are on file in the guidance office.</p> <p>Compile your final list of schools. (Include 'dream schools', 'probables', and 'safe schools'.)</p> <p>Track deadlines and required admission items for each one.</p> <p>Talk to college alumni.</p> <p>Ask questions.</p> <p>Take SATs and ACTs. Have scores sent to the colleges you have selected. If necessary, register for December or January SATs or ACTs.</p> <p>Submit your college applications.</p> <p>Make sure your test scores are being sent to the correct colleges.</p> <p>Discuss financial aid programs.</p> <p>Schedule interviews.</p> <p><b>Check financial aid options. Submit college aid application Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> - June 30<sup>th</sup>. These forms are submitted even if you have not been accepted to college.</b></p> <p><b><u>FAFSA and CSS Filing is available beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> - June 30<sup>th</sup>. Parental tax return information is necessary.</u></b></p> <p>Please click on the link for all participating CSS Profile colleges and universities:</p> <p><a href="https://profile.collegeboard.org/profile/ppi/participatingInstitutions.aspx">https://profile.collegeboard.org/profile/ppi/participatingInstitutions.aspx</a></p>	<p>Watch for any early decision/early action replies, which usually arrive between December 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p>Check ALL application deadlines. For SUNY, December 1<sup>st</sup> is suggested.</p> <p>Make sure your transcripts have been sent to the colleges of your choice.</p> <p>Call admissions offices of the colleges to which you applied, making sure that all your information has been received.</p> <p>Visit your guidance office often.</p> <p>Be aware of deadlines.</p> <p><b>Call the colleges and universities to ensure you have all of the correct audition information.</b></p> <p><b>Begin to prepare and schedule for your college auditions.</b></p>

<p><b>February/March</b></p> <p>Mid-year grades must be sent to colleges requesting them. Check with your guidance counselor.</p> <p>Complete any scholarship applications. Check with college financial aid office to make sure they have received all pertinent information.</p> <p>If you took AP courses, check dates for AP exams.</p> <p>Make certain all forms are filled out correctly.</p> <p>If your college applications require essays, now is the time to begin the writing process.</p>	<p><b>April/May</b></p> <p>Colleges usually make their decisions by April 15<sup>th</sup>. You will be notified via email and/or mail.</p> <p>If accepted by more than one college, carefully compare financial aid and scholarship packages. Consult with your parents, and weigh your decision carefully.</p> <p>Most colleges want a final decision by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Notify the school of your choice, return required information and follow ALL deadlines!</p> <p>If you are put on a waiting list, and still are interested in attending, make sure to let the college know of your intent.</p> <p>When you make your decision, notify your guidance counselor. Inform your counselor about any scholarships or awards you may have received.</p> <p>Once a selection is made, you will be required to pay a nonrefundable deposit for freshman tuition, ensuring your place in the entering class.</p> <p>Notify schools you have decided not to attend.</p> <p>Send thank-you notes to anyone who assisted you in the college planning process, including those who wrote letters of recommendation.</p>	<p><b>June - Summer Before Freshman Year</b></p> <p>Make sure your final transcripts are sent to the school of your choice.</p> <p>Know when all fees are due for tuition and room &amp; board. Contact the college if they have not gotten in touch with you.</p> <p>Attend summer orientation programs.</p> <p>Obtain student health insurance to cover unforeseen emergencies.</p> <p>Make sure you graduate!</p>
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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Additional Score Report.** Forms that are used to have your SAT I/II scores sent to which you apply.

**Advanced Placement.** Advanced Placement is credit or placement in a college course on the basis of performance in high school or scores on exams as the Advanced Placement (AP) Exams. Scores 4 or 5 on the APs can often help you place out of introductory courses in college.

**Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BA/BS).** A standard degree by the college or university to a person who has completed a four year course of study or its equivalent in the liberal arts.

**Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA).** A standard degree for students seeking a professional education in the visual or performing arts. A typical BFA program consists of two-thirds study in the arts, with one-third in more general liberal arts studies.

**Candidate Notification Date.** This is the date by which colleges notify students of their admissions decisions. Usually the date is April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Candidate's Reply Date.** This is the date by which you must tell a school you will attend and make a deposit. Usually that date is May 1<sup>st</sup>. You are expected to notify at once any other college that has accepted you and which you do not plan to attend. This is not just a courtesy; it is crucial to other students who are on the waiting list.

**College Representative Visits.** College admissions officials visit in the fall, during lunch period. The schedule of visits is posted on the calendar outside the counseling office. Even if you know the schools to which you will apply, take advantage of these visits to ask questions, learn more about the schools, and show your commitment to the college representatives.

**College Scholarship Service (CSS/Financial Aid Profile).** CSS is a division of the College Board that assists college and scholarship programs in administering and analyzing your family's financial aid information by using pre-determined, standardized formulas. The form they use to do this is the CSS Profile. It will be available online in the early fall. Note the college deadlines for the Profile. Many colleges require this form in addition to the FAFSA and a college's own form.

**College Visit.** These are considered to be the most valuable experiences in choosing a college. You can go on the structured visits that may include an organized tour, an information session, auditing of a class and an overnight stay. Or you can do a less formal visit. The type of visit you should do depends on your needs. Students typically schedule visits any time between spring of their junior year, and early winter of their senior year.

**Degree.** Degree is the title awarded by an educational institution to signify the completion of a program of study.

**Early Action.** You can apply early to college and receive notice of admission early. The deadline is typically in November and students are usually notified around mid-December. There is not commitment to attend if you are accepted. You can be accepted, deferred to the regular application pool, or rejected entirely. If you are rejected, the school will no longer consider your application. If you think you may want to apply early, check college catalogues and websites in the spring for application and SAT I/II deadlines.

**Early Decision.** Early Decision applications to college are binding. This means if you are accepted under the early decision plan, you are legally obligated to attend. You cannot even apply to other schools. Deadlines are similar for those applying under early action. Check college catalogues and websites for more deadline information.

**Educational Testing Service (ETS).** ETS is the program of the College Board that provides college entrance tests and services for students planning to attend college. Check out [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) for more information.

**FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).** The FAFSA is used by the federal government to determine a student's eligibility for financial aid. It should be completed as soon as possible after January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year a student is matriculating. Forms are available online in the fall. Check [www.fafsa.org](http://www.fafsa.org) for more information.

**Financial Aid Package.** Any combination of student and parent loans, scholarships, a job and grants to help you and your family pay your college bill.

**Fee Waiver.** Students with great financial need can sometimes have fees for SATs, college applications and financial aid forms waived.

**Interviews for College.** These can be on-campus interviews, often with an admissions representative, that are sometimes used as part of the evaluation process, or as information and question and answer sessions. We recommend that you do an interview only if you are comfortable in doing so. Ask your counselor for a mock interview to help you prepare. Do not forget to write a "thank you" card to the interviewer. You are responsible for scheduling interviews. Please review college interview policies on their websites.

**Rolling Admissions.** Rolling Admissions is a process by which applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Large state schools, including SUNY, often have rolling admissions policies, rather than a finite deadline. When a school has a rolling deadline, the sooner you submit your application, the more likely you will be accepted.

**Safety Schools.** A Safety School is a school that customarily admits students with a transcript and SAT scores similar to yours. It should be a school that meets your needs and that you may want to attend. Many students are now adding financial safety schools to their list: that is, schools they can afford regardless of the aid package offered.

**Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).** This is a New York State Program that provides tuition relief for students attending college in New York State.

**Transcript.** The official record of high school or college courses, grades and credit earned. To be considered official, a transcript must be sent from one institution to another and cannot be sent by the student.

## **READ! RESEARCH! REVIEW!**

### ***ADMISSIONS REFERENCE BOOKS:***

- The College Board College Handbook
- The College Board Book of Majors
- Barron's Profile of American Colleges
- Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges
- Princeton Review's The Best 379 Colleges
- Orr's America's Best Colleges for B Students

### ***WEBSITES:***

- Naviance - <http://connection.naviance.com>
- National Association for College Admissions Counseling - [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)
- CUNY College Information - [www.cuny.edu](http://www.cuny.edu)
- Petersons - [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- College Board - [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)
- College View - [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)
- US News & World Report Online - [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com) (click on college rankings)
- School Guides - [www.schoolguides.com](http://www.schoolguides.com)
- SUNY College Info - [www.suny.edu](http://www.suny.edu)

### ***OTHER REFERENCES***

- The National Directory of College Athletics
- The Insider's Guide to the Colleges
- The College Board Costs & Financial Aid Handbook
- Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges
- Fiske Guide to the Colleges
- Barron's Best Buys in College Education
- Colleges for Students with Disabilities



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**[www.nassauboces.org](http://www.nassauboces.org)**

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**[www.nassauboces.org/lihsa](http://www.nassauboces.org/lihsa)**

**Non-Discrimination Statement:**

The Nassau BOCES advises students, parents, employees and the general public that it offers employment and educational opportunities without regard to age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, military/veteran status, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical condition), gender, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, disability, predisposing genetic characteristic(s), or domestic violence victim status. Moreover, the Nassau BOCES shall provide equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

Information and grievance procedures are available by contacting the following Civil Rights Compliance Officer at 71 Clinton Rd., Garden City, NY 11530: Selma Stoddard, Esq., Attorney (Employee Relations), Department of Human Resources at 516-396-2360, [sstoddard@nasboces.org](mailto:sstoddard@nasboces.org). Inquiries concerning the application of regulations prohibiting discrimination may be referred to the above-mentioned Civil Rights Compliance Officer or to the Office for Civil Rights at NY Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 32 Old Slip, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10005-2500 or call 646-428-3900, or fax 646-428-3843, or TDD 800-877-8339 or email [OCR.NewYork@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.NewYork@ed.gov) or file form at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>.