



The US University Handbook

The Basics of What You Need to Know for applying to US
Colleges and Universities

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE COLLEGE SELECTION PROCESS

Finding the right college is a decision-making process. It seems hard because there are so many choices and trying to figure out where to apply is overwhelming. Most people choose schools that they have heard of, thinking – “they are famous, they must be good. Harvard must be good, it’s famous so I will apply there.” But did you know that Harvard only accepts 7% of its applicants? And if you are an international student, less than 3% and if you are from China, they might take 3 students. Wow! That is hard; maybe even impossible. So, how to figure out what to do?

The purpose of this guide is to help you sort out how to find the best school for you. If you want the best school, there are thousands of best schools. Each university or college is good at something. They would not exist if they were not. So, the real question is “what school is best for you?”

Now, it is true that everyone has an opinion on colleges and universities. They all want to share in your success or at very least share their opinion with you. Most people mean well when they tell you X University is a great school and you should apply. But the fact is, X University may be a fabulous school, but it may be the worst school for you or the major you want to study at that university is the worst in the country.

We have heard people tell us that where they go to school will determine their future. We all know this is not true, but it sure sounds reasonable. Bill Gates as everyone knows did not even graduate from university. People like Warren Buffett went to University of Nebraska, but later to Columbia University for graduate school. In fact, most Chief Executive Officers (CEO’s) of the top 500 corporations

did not; I repeat, DID NOT attend an Ivy League college as an undergraduate student.

Let's look at China since this is where we are at the moment. Did you know that this year 98,000 Chinese students are studying in the US? That's a lot of students. Most universities accept on average 5-10% international students. When I say international that is a general term for all students coming from outside the US. If Harvard is only taking 3 students from China and all the other Ivy League or top schools are accepting more or less the same then where are all these other students going? To be gracious, let's just say that 100 Chinese students are at the top 10 schools – that leaves 97,900 students going to all sorts of different schools. So where are they all going? Lots of different schools.

I cannot tell you how many students come to me and say, "I have to go to a Top 50 school". Well, that's nice and I want to win a million dollars! The competition for places at those schools is very stiff. Everyone wants to go to these schools because they think they are the best. But remember, admission to US Universities is not like in China. The process is very different and there is no guarantee ever that you will get in to a school, particularly the Top 50, whatever that means.

Rankings drive us nuts. There are so many rankings out in the media it is hard to keep them straight. There is US News and World Report, Forbes, Business Week, World Rankings etc... and every one of them is different. We really wish there were no rankings. That schools were valued on teaching style and quality, community development, internship access, percentage of students accepted to great graduate programs and many other qualities. Unfortunately, people who do the rankings use different criteria and many of those criteria have nothing, absolutely nothing to do

with the quality of education.

So why do people rank? Because there are people out there who want to say they go to the US News and World Report Best School. It's easy to look at a list and say, "I want that school?" It is harder to do the research and find the best school for you. If we can agree you are the most important person in your life, then you deserve what is best for you. If we can further agree that you know you better than anyone else, then we can agree that you need to determine where to go to school. Besides, this may be the very first time you have chosen where you will go to school. If we can agree on all of these things, then, let's get to work! Because even though everyone is interested in where you go to university, the ultimate choice of where you attend is yours alone.

I hope we can agree on one more thing before we move forward. While it is important to choose a major, did you know that most people change majors 6-7 times before they graduate? And did you know that most people will change careers 6-7 times before they retire? Did you know that many people work in a field that has absolutely nothing to do with what they studied in university? Of course, there are exceptions, but for the most part this is true. Now, while students study their majors or while they are learning at school, what are the essential things they are learning? I will give you some time to think about it... By the way it is not just math, science. History... Come on... Ok, I will tell you – students are learning the following skills: critical and analytical thinking, solid communication skills (reading, writing and oral communication skills) and they are learning to be good citizens. If you do not have these important skills when you graduate from university, it does not matter what career you have, you will struggle and most likely get fired. If we can agree that the main purpose of going to university is to learn these skills then it really does

not matter where we go to university. I know that there is no school better at teaching math or science than any other school. The Ivy League schools do not teach them any better than any other school. French is French and math is math no matter where you study them. What is important is choosing a school that matches your learning style, has a community where you can grow – academically, personally and eventually professionally. The schools you choose should engage you in and provide you with opportunities to do research, get internships and prepare you for your future. But, they better be teaching you those most important skills – critical and analytical thinking and communication.

One can argue that the BEST schools teach those skills. I am sure they do. Here are two things you may not know. First, the Ivy League is for sports. Period. Yes, it is true; the Ivy League is for football, American Football. Second, Ivy League schools are much better known for their graduate programs than they are for their undergraduate ones. Finally, if the best of the best students are attending those schools, why are some of the top people in their fields teaching, doing research and working with bright young students at thousands of other schools?

Over the next year you are going to learn a lot about yourself as you go through the college selection process. Take your time, but hurry. There is not much time left. There is much you need to do – go to school, keep your grades up or improve them, take SAT I and possibly SAT II, TOEFL, research schools, visit schools, get lots of materials together, ask teachers to write letters of recommendation, create a resume, write essays and apply. Wow! That is a lot to do.

II. THE GOAL

The goal of any good college advising program is to help you understand the college

selection process so that you can make sound educational decisions. You will learn how to evaluate yourself, research colleges accurately and to communicate those things to the colleges. Throughout the college selection process, the focus will be on you - a particular student looking for a special college.

While there are lots of people who can help, it is your responsibility, however, to research the colleges, complete online college applications, take the proper tests, meet your deadlines, meet with college representatives, and arrange your college visits and interviews. It is your responsibility to make appointments with your college advisor to talk over what you are learning about yourself, how you evaluate your special talents, and what you are learning about the colleges on your list.

Our goal then is to help you keep on track, stay focused and help you through the process.

III. GETTING STARTED

What are some of the things you can do immediately to narrow the number of schools down to something manageable? With thousands of colleges and universities it is hard to sort through them all. But there are things you can do to sift through all of them.

First of all, you need to know what kind of student you are. Most of you have been in large classes in a very large high school. You may not know whether you would like smaller classes, know your teacher better because that is not something you are used to. But when it comes to choosing a university, the size of the school is important.

We can all agree that you know your current school. You have been there for a few years. Most of you know many other students at your school and they know you. They know lots about you. Your teachers know you. You probably even like your school! So, you may want the same style of community when you go off to university. However, you may want to have a larger community, with more diverse people, more options for courses etc... Choosing the school community is just as important as where the school is located.

Size matters in some ways. Most students think that a large university is better because it is bigger. But that is not always true. In a large university it is hard to get noticed. No one really knows you. If you are used to joining up with friends at school for study groups or social activities, it will be much harder at a large university. Consider for a moment what it would be like attending a school with 25,000 or 40,000 students. That is a lot of people! How are you going to manage in a community that big? Some students are independent and focused enough to cope with a place that large, but if you are shy, quiet, like to know your teachers, you will find a school of that size really challenging.

Another thing to consider are the opportunities to get internships and research positions: the larger the school, the more competition. Sure, once you are a Junior there are more opportunities, but what about before then, in Freshman and Sophomore years? You want to be able to maximize your college experience because after four short years, you are on your own. So consider what you want to gain besides an education, because university is about so much more.

While it is important to think about size, some students don't really care. They can be happy and successful no matter what kind of school they are in. They just go

about their business. Others need to think about their personal learning style. If you are okay with being a number, and I mean a number (a student ID number or for Americans, typically their Social Security number) and the bureaucracy that comes with a large school, then that is the type of school you should consider. If you would like a more intimate place, where professors know you, and you can be noticed then considering a smaller college maybe more appropriate. It is and should be a personal choice. But in order for it to be a personal choice it is important to consider what type of student you are and what kind of environment is going to bring out the best in you.

Okay, so now you have thought about size. It is time to think about location. The US is a large country with several time zones and climates. Not only should you think about weather but you should think about where the school is located – city, suburbia or out in the country. If you grew up in a large city and like the excitement of nightclubs, museums and other cultural events, you may want to attend school in a city. If you like the outdoors, think about that as a location, if you don't like snow – go to Texas! Just kidding, but it is important to consider where you are going. In addition, how easy or hard is the school to get to. Is there an international airport nearby? Do you have friends or family nearby? There is a lot to think about.

The next step is to talk about College vs. University. The difference confuses most people. It is hard to remember which school is a college and which is a university. Generally speaking a university has two main differences – 1. A university is made up of different colleges (e.g. College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business etc...) and 2. A university has graduate programs. Did you know that when you apply to Harvard, you are applying to Harvard College, not Harvard University?

In reality there is no real difference between the two. There are great colleges just as there are great universities. Middlebury College is one of the top schools in the US as is Williams or Amherst. University Pennsylvania and many others like it are also well renowned. Now the problem may be that your parents, may not know the difference. Just point out some of these schools just mentioned and perhaps they will get a better idea of what we are talking about.

Now there are some other differences of which you should be aware. There are research schools, collegiate schools, Liberal Arts schools and specialty schools. Research schools do not take much explaining – big institutions whose primary focus is not only on education but also on research. They get money from the federal government to conduct all sorts of research in all kinds of areas (science, economics, engineering etc...). Collegiate schools are big into sports like American Football, basketball etc... Liberal Arts schools may take a whole paragraph to discuss.

What is a Liberal Arts college? Generally speaking Liberal Arts is the study of English, Math, History, and Science. But it is much more than that. Remember, when we talked about the most important skills you need to be successful – well, Liberal Arts expressly teaches you those skills (critical and analytical thinking and communication). It is based on general knowledge rather than specific. If you want to be an engineer, Liberal Arts probably is not what you want to study but if you are interested in business, the arts, medicine, then you should focus on the Liberal Arts.

Specialty schools are schools that do one specific thing like business or engineering. For example – Babson College is a top business school. Cooper Union only teaches Art and Engineering. Many schools like Rhode Island School of Design and

Savannah College of the Arts are specialists in art. The list goes on. For students who know exactly what they want to study and what they want to do for a career, and then a school of this type is an excellent choice.

One last thing - Throughout this guide there will be mention of college and university. In the US people typically do not distinguish between university and college. When people talk they often use “college” when talking about university and vice versa. In the US, the word or concept of “college” does not have the same meaning as it does in other countries. In Canada for instance, college means Community College i.e. two year school, not a four-year school. This is true in other countries as well, where the idea of college is not the same as in the US. As mentioned earlier, some of the best schools in the US are colleges. So, the important thing to figure out is, which one is best for you.

Thus far you’ve had lots to think about. Not only do you have lots to think about, you have lots to do. Remember what follows is your responsibility. But you are not alone. We are here to help. All you need to do is ask. This college-planning guide will help you develop your own list of colleges with your academic record and your interests and goals in mind. So even though we can help provide information about colleges, make sure your list is appropriate for your academic record, submitting your applications, writing clear and interesting essays, reporting your SATs, and knowing and meeting all your deadlines has to be your responsibility. It is important to plan ahead, be prepared and refer to this guide often.

Let’s move to some practical issues you should keep in mind:

IV. THE COLLEGE CALENDAR

Below is a schedule to help you plan ahead for the next two years. We strongly recommend that you follow it completely:

a. The Second to Last Year of High School

October	PSAT - for all juniors
October-December	Begin to learn college research methods, meet with visiting college representatives
January	US College/University Trip or vacation
February - June	College conferences with college advisor begin to collect materials for the application, think about teacher recommendations, and check out some of the applications and essay questions
Chinese New Year	A great time to visit colleges
March 16-30	Spring break – consider some college visits
May	SAT Reasoning for all juniors
June	SAT II Subject Tests
June - August	Visit colleges, write college essays

b. The Last Year of High School

September	College Application Seminar
September	Finalize college list with college advisor
Sept.-December	Meet with college representatives; student-parent college conference
September	Deadline for notifying College Advising Office and teachers

	of early application plans
November 1, 15	Many Early applications are due
NOVEMBER 15	Deadline for College applications for all regular college applications
January 1 or 15	Deadline for most college applications
February 1	Deadline for many college applications
April 1	Common college notification date
May 1	Common reply date, deposit required
June	Time to begin the Visa application process

Developing Your College List

V. SELF ASSESSMENT

As mentioned there is a lot of choice when it comes to college or university. It is unmanageable! But there are things you can do to make it easier. Below are some tools to help you figure some things out about yourself. Self-knowledge is very important. By knowing yourself you can hopefully avoid falling into what other people think about what is good for you. Lots of people think they know what is best for you, but if you take the time to learn about what is important to you, then you will be sure to find what is important for you.

Below are some questions to get you thinking. Take your time on this section; come back to them as you go through the process of thinking about what you want out of your future educational experience.

a. Goals and Values

What kind of student am I?

What kind of student would I like to become?

What aspects of school have I enjoyed the most?

What part of school do I like least?

How do I define success?

Do I have ideas about a career?

Do I have short or long term goals?

b. Academic

What are my favorite and least favorite courses?

What do I choose to learn when I learn on my own?

Do my grades reflect my ability and potential? Why?

How well has my school prepared me for college?

Are my SAT/TOEFL scores an accurate measure of my ability?

What is the average number of hours I study each night?

In what kind of atmosphere do I study best?

Do I like to study with friends?

Am I easily distracted? By Facebook? Computer games? Yahoo Messenger?

c. Activities, Interests and Aspirations

What activities do I enjoy most outside of the classroom?

What activities do I plan to pursue in college?

What do my parents expect of me?

What do my friends expect of me?

Who has influenced me the most?

What kinds of surroundings are essential to my well-being?

Am I a leader? How have I demonstrated my leadership abilities?

d. Personality and Relationship to Others

What adjectives do I use to describe myself?

How would my best friend describe me?

Which relationships are most important to me? Why?

How free do I feel to make my own decisions?

How do I feel about going to a college where the other students are quite different from me?

How do I feel about going to a college very different from my current school?

e. Essay Assignment

Use the assessment questions above to write, "What Kind of a Student Am I?"

This is an important exercise. Remember you will have lots of voices in your head as you write this – the voices of your parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents, teachers and other people. Try to think about who you are when you write this. Keep it simple and be realistic. This essay is about the kind of student you are now, NOT the kind of student you want to be! If you do not love researching or doing scientific experiments, then don't claim them to be something you like. Be honest with your self.

What you write here can possibly help you become a better student as you consider your strengths and weaknesses. Once you have done this essay and answered these questions, you should have a better idea about what you want out of your college experience. So, now it is time to begin the next step - Researching schools.

VI. COLLEGE RESEARCH

Now we are at the most challenging part – finding schools. If you have followed the advice about it will be a bit easier. But there are still some things to think about and definitely some things not to think about. It is VERY, VERY important to keep an

open mind in this next step. Lots of students “fall in love” with specific schools for all the wrong reasons, keep an open mind, being objective and remaining true to who you are will certainly help you sort through all of the choices.

With so many choices it is easy to get distracted, that is why it is important to remember what you want out of school and out of life. Some people will tell you this is the most important decision you will ever make. While important, I don’t really agree. Who you marry may have more long-term effects. It is also easy to let other people tell you where to go and what to study. I will say that this is probably the first time you will make a “big” decision. So make it right and do it for you.

As you go through the process of looking into schools there are lots of tools to use – books, the Internet, your college advisor, college representatives and so forth. If you keep important facts about yourself in mind as you read, listen and see, you will begin to find key aspects of schools. Remember there are lots of schools and every college has something to offer. There would not be so many choices if they all offered the same thing. The object is finding schools where you want to go, to go live, learn and mature.

Over the next several months you should be taking the time to learn about colleges. So how do you go about doing it? First thing you should do is to throw away any “Ranking” list. At very least ranking lists are used to sell magazines, not education. They are trying to sell you on something that most likely has no relevance to who you are or what you want. So start simply, read some college guides. Here are a few books to get you started:

***The Fiske Guide* by Edward Fiske**

The Best 371 Best Colleges by Princeton Review

Colleges That Change Lives

Eight First Choices by Joyce Slayton Mitchell

We will talk more about some of these later. But first consider these things:

When you read or hear about a college, notice who said it. Was it the college rep? What's his bias? Was it a student, what's his/her bias? Was it a college guide? Was the guide written by an educator or by students? What's in it for them? Why do they have a particular view of their college? One senior came back after a Northwestern presentation at a New York City hotel and said, "I'm in love with Northwestern; I just have to apply there!" Good for the college rep, he did his job well. THE real question is, why did that student come away feeling that and how can you find the same sort of feelings toward a list of schools?

Putting together your list of colleges should be based on your current academic performance, not where you want to be or where you think you should be. Lots of people make this mistake and end up miserable or with no acceptances. It is important to be realistic, because colleges are looking at what your record says now. They definitely are not interested in "why" your record isn't better than it is. Colleges are interested in the record as you have built during high school, and where your academic record can take you now that you are a junior or senior. They want to make sure that if you are accepted, you will be academically successful in their school. That is why you have to apply to schools that fit your academic range. Remember, you are not the only student applying. There maybe other more qualified candidates you are competing against. Your job is to stand out in this applicant pool. You cannot stand out if your grades and scores do not meet the schools basic requirements.

The point is don't plan to apply to the most competitive colleges with a B average in a minimum program with 600 SATs and expect to get in. There is no such thing as a “Just Try Application”. Students get accepted to schools because they have the academic record to get in. Schools look first at Grades, then SAT/ACT scores. If you do not have what they are looking for, your application will stop right there! Activities and sports count only if you have the grades and rigorous classes the college is looking for. Even though you may hear more about SATs than you hear about a demanding course load; how you do everyday in school is worth more than how you do on a three-hour test. Your SAT scores should support your academic record.

a. College Representatives

Each year, colleges send out representatives to “present” their schools to prospective students and parents. Representatives are a great resource. Many of the reps graduated from the school they represent or they graduated from similar schools. Some are long-term professionals. The main point is that they literally travel around the world telling students and parents about their schools and the programs they offer. They want to get you excited and interested. Just like the student we talked about before who went to the Northwestern presentation and came away wanting to apply.

Many times I hear students say, “Why should I go hear about THAT school, I have never hear of it before?” First off, that is EXACTLY why you should go hear about it – you have never heard of it before. Just because you have not heard about that school does not mean it is not a good school or more importantly, a good school for you. By choosing not to listen to the presentation, you are missing an opportunity to

find out whether or not that school is right for you. Even if you leave the presentation thinking. “No WAY”, at least you know it is not the right school for you. AND, you now have a clearer idea about what you do want. Every presentation should help you find qualities in schools you want and do not want. That is research. Do yourself a favor; go to these information sessions.

Sometimes representatives travel in small or large groups. They usually travel together because they are either similar types of schools or they are very different. Sometimes you might be interested in only one of the schools. That is okay. Go listen to why they are the same or why they are different. In the end, you will know more leaving than when you entered the presentation.

Finally, another and very important reason to go to these presentations is this. If you find out that you really like this school, or the presentation reconfirms what you already know, you now have a link to the school. The representative will leave their business card with their email address. They don't leave their card just to be nice; they do so because they are offering you a service. If you have questions, want clarification or just want some advice, contact the person. There are lots of rumors out there about college admission. I once heard a student say that a certain school had no financial aid money for international students. He had “heard” it from some friends. We told him to contact the school and ask. This student found out that not only did the school have financial aid; they offered more aid to international students than most schools. Unless you have heard it from the source, don't believe it.

The representative is your contact at the school. But don't contact them about things you can find on the schools webpage or their view book. That makes you look

silly. If you decide to apply, it is possible that they will be supporting your application in the admission committee. You will want them to know that you are interested. Lots of students think that by just applying, their application shows interest. But you apply in the fall and they read your application in the winter. Good things may have happened to you that are important to your application – you got the best grades ever, you finally made the varsity basketball team, you received an award at the Talent Show or your English teacher loved your essay on *Huckleberry Finn*. Just make sure you are contacting them about appropriate things you are proud to share. But, remember, they are not your friends. They are professionals. When you write them, remember to do so with respect.

b. College Guides, Catalogs, View books and Internet

Now we are back to talking about books and other research tools.

1) *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*. Edward Fiske, Time Books, latest edition.

This essay-style guide describes interesting information and evaluations for 350+ of the most competitive and most interesting undergraduate colleges. College life and environment is the most crucial component of the college, if you don't fit in, you won't stay. Be sure to get an idea of "what it's like" to be on campus from this guide. It's the best... study it! It is available in the AP Course Office.

2) *Eight First Choices*, by Joyce Slayton Mitchell, Here's the "how to get into college" guide written by one of your college advisors. It's the college guide that college admissions deans like best.

3). *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges*, The Yale Daily News, latest edition, published by students for students. It is student-biased and it's definitely the next best thing to being there.

4) *The College Handbook*, The College Board, 2008. One of the most accurate and up-to-date college guides available; the College Board collects the data

each year from their own membership. Every college in the country is in this guide.

5) *The 371 Best Colleges*, Princeton Review, 2010. This guide sets out some of the best schools in the country by looking at both factual data and student survey responses. It will tell you “what is hot” and “what is not” in terms of courses, majors, campus life, food and other essential information. It also gives you a section to find out where students who liked that particular school also applied.

If you have any other special interests, check in the College Advising Office and bookstores for special guides for other types of colleges. And of course, you will always check out Google for any specifics that interest you.

There are loads of tools to assist you in finding information about colleges, universities and programs on the Internet. Here are a couple you might find useful:

1. College Confidential: www.collegeconfidential.com this is a great resource to find out not only what professionals say about a school but also what current and prospective students are talking about.
2. University GO: www.unigo.com is an other student focused search tool
3. Of course, College Board: www.collegeboard.com is a one stop site with information not only about PSAT, SAT I and II but also has some search capabilities
4. Family Connection: the web address will be given to you, but this is a great resource for schools around the world. There are a variety of tests: personality inventories, career tests and connections to *The Fiske Guide*.
5. UCAN: <http://www.ucan-network.org/> as they say “Get the Facts for a smart college choice!”
6. NACAC: www.nacacnet.org NACAC stands for the National Association for College Admission Counseling. They set the standards by which colleges and universities must abide as well as counselors. There is a whole Student Section to help guide you through the application process.

If you are considering the UK then you must go to:

1. UCAS: www.ucas.com UCAS is the University Central Application Service. You can not only find information about all of the universities and course numbers but

this is where you will apply to university.

If you are thinking about Canada, each province has their own website to assist you.

c. College Visits

Living on the other side of the ocean makes it a challenge to actually visit colleges and universities. But this should not hold you back. There are a number of ways to visit colleges without actually flying to the US. Check out some of these websites:

- 1. www.YouniversityTV.com**
- 2. www.campustours.com**

These are two excellent websites where you may take virtual tours of most of the campuses in the US. They are also good research tools.

If you can go to the US either on a sponsored trip or with your parents the campus visit will probably have the greatest impact on your college choice. For that reason, it's one of the most important parts of college research. An official tour of the campus, joining a group tour from the admissions office, or just hanging out in the student union can be worthwhile to you. Almost all of you have never seen a university in the US. It is important to get a sense of the academic environment, the social scene and the atmosphere before applying.

There are good times and not such good times to visit colleges. Chinese New Year is a wonderful time to begin visiting colleges since most colleges are in session with students running around going to class, hanging out in the Student Union etc.. Although regular classes are not in session, summer vacation is another good time for visits. In addition, if the school requires or recommends interviews you can more easily request a personal interview during this time. It is important to learn as much about the school as you can so try to get a feeling for the environment and the facilities of the college you are visiting. You can always return for a visit after you

are accepted if you feel you need to meet more students and visit classes.

When planning a college visit, do not make the mistake of trying to visit too many colleges on one trip. Do, however, visit a variety of different types of colleges; this should help you clarify your thoughts in the decision-making process.

Before you fly half way around the world contact the school and arrange a campus tour. But, check the website first to see how the school organizes visiting the campus. If you plan ahead, the admission office will often take you to class. When on the campus tour, be sure to ask the student guide as many questions as you can think of. Students are often the best sources of information about a college that you can get.

Here are some questions to consider and get you started:

- 1) What is your largest class? Smallest? What is the average class size?
- 2) Who teaches you, can you get help from the professor? How well do you know your professors?
- 3) Who teaches the lab sections?
- 4) Do you ever study in the library? Where do you study?
- 5) Who grades your exams?
- 6) Do students talk a lot about grades?
- 7) Have you ever been in a faculty home? How often?
- 8) Do you talk much about national politics and issues?
- 9) Where are the geeks and nerds? What do you think of them?
- 10) Where can I get a copy of the campus newspaper?
- 11) What do you like best/worst about being a student here?
- 12) Where do most of the students hang out?
- 13) Why did you choose this school?

14) Where else did you apply?

15) If you could change anything about this school, what would it be?

d. College Interviews

Some schools require an interview as part of the application process. The value of the interview is to get a better sense of who you are. It helps them, the admission folks, put a person to the application. Even though colleges vary on the value of an interview, many of the colleges to which you might apply consider an interview valuable in the college selection process. At the least, interviews on the college campus are a wonderful way for you to learn more about a college. Check the school's application policy to see if they offer interviews then write or phone for an interview appointment at least two weeks in advance. Ask for an interview, even though you may not be sure that you will apply.

Here are some important things to consider before you leave home and visit schools:

1. It is important to know important things about the college *before* you have the interview. Read the college guides and catalog ahead of time. Have some questions in mind that are specific for that college, your major or interests. Know your strengths and weaknesses, interests and special talents. Remember that interviews are a two-way exchange, a conversation about you and why you are interested in that particular school.

2. Don't chew gum! You want the interviewer to have a good impression.

3. Watch your language! Avoid words such as "like," "cool," "whatever." At least cut down on the numbers of times you repeat these words.

4. Dress appropriately since first impressions are important. A skirt or pants and sweater or any informal school clothes are suitable. Look neat and mature, you're visiting a university. Be sure to arrive on time, shake hands firmly, sit and stand

straight, and in general act confident and happy to be there.

5. Admissions interviews are your opportunity to sell yourself. Make a friend of the interviewer. Look him/her in the eye. Be straightforward and relaxed in your conversation.

- a. Don't try to tell them "what they want to hear." Be confident that there are no "right" answers.**
- b. They want to know you better.**
- c. Your attitude toward learning is what they want to know most.**
- d. Do you have a sense of humor?**
- e. Do you have the ability to overcome tough situations?**
- f. How will you manage your time and life when you get away from home and you are on your own?**
- g. What are your values?**

The more you like you, the more the interviewer (and others) will, too! Practice makes perfect. Your first college conference with your college advisor is a great opportunity for you to practice a campus interview. Also, have clear goals that you are able to discuss honestly. Some common questions they may ask or you may initiate are:

- 1. Why are you interested in this college?**
- 2. What things are most important to you in a college?**
- 3. What are your educational goals?**
- 4. Why should we accept you? What do you expect to contribute to our college community?**
- 5. Don't give excuses for your grades and tell what you're going to do next year (wishful thinking). Talk about your strengths (not reasons why, or if only I...). For example, your love for reading, for sports, for a beautiful campus, for Latin, for computers, for politics, your pride in your family, your achievements, your dog**

training, your summer school experience.

6. Take time to listen to the questions, and answer them directly. It's hard, but try not to worry about silence. Collect your thoughts and be sure you understand the question being asked. If you are unsure of the question, ask the interviewer to repeat the question. Tell the admissions person that you are eager to go to college and what you like about *this* college.

e. Your Teachers

College alumni are a valuable resource for learning more about a specific college. Ask your teacher to tell you about the colleges they attended or the colleges they know about. Besides, they know you pretty well; they know your academic strengths and weaknesses so they can make suggestions about schools where you might fit.

f. Research Questions

Here are some questions to consider when you are researching schools:

1. What's it like?
2. Can I get in?
3. What will become of me?
4. How much does it cost?

1) Research Question Number One: What's it Like?

Size, environment, location, number of students, geographical and international percentages, percent of residential students, diversity on campus, beauty of campus, types of programs offered, what sports division are they in, who do I know there, how do Chinese students do there? How large are the freshmen classes? Who teaches freshmen? How accessible are the college's computers? Do I have to take math or foreign language to graduate? Is there an internship program? How many

freshmen graduate from this college? What is the average amount of time it takes a student to graduate? What's the percentage of students in sororities and fraternities on this campus?

These are all questions you should be thinking about when you look at schools. Many students just hear the name of a school and they want to apply without ever thinking about the answers to these questions.

2) Research Question Number Two: Can I get in?

How selective are they? Do my courses show that I took the most challenging and appropriate courses? Are my courses more demanding than most of the admitted students? Is my record as good or better than most admitted? Disregard the general numbers (SATs, GPA, rank) that are listed in the college guides for selectivity because while those are important, if your courses are too easy and you are getting A+ in every subject, it is because your courses are too easy or your really are a genius.

This has been said before but how you do in school every day is the most important factor in admission. SAT scores are important, but they should support or be in align with the grades you earn. GPA only means something to your school. There are lots of different grading systems and thus different GPA's. Numbers are just numbers until one looks at what is behind them.

Transcripts – let's talk a moment about this very important document. Depending on the type of school you are attending there is some form of Official Grades issued. Some schools use A, B, C, D; some schools use 100-90%. 89-80%, 79-70%, some use an IB Model – 1-7 and there is a whole mix in between. Official grades are those used at the end of each marking period i.e. semester, trimester. Grades from mid

marking period points are not considered official. Many schools have semester exams and the add in other factors such as in class participation, homework, tests and essays. All of this information comes together to be put on the Official School transcript.

The transcript is used for a variety of purposes, but generally speaking transcripts are sent to schools when you apply for a seat at that institution whether is it a boarding school, another school or university. This is the record by which schools determine what kind of student you are, what kinds of courses you have taken and the grades you earned in those courses.

Many schools use these grades to determine GPA or Grade Point Average. The GPA is a calculation of all of your grades over your high school career. Lots of students moan about their GPA, but rest assured that the GPA calculation is only pertinent to your school and the students within your school.

There are a number of schools that do not calculate GPA. For instance. If you attend a British school that offers A-Levels. There is no such thing as a GPA because it is not a part of the school system or philosophy. At a British school what becomes important are IGCSE, AS Level and A-Level predicted grades. IGCSE and AS Level grades are important because they are externally moderated, meaning everyone takes the same test and an outside of school group (EDEXCEL, AQA for example) grade the tests. The same is true for IB.

Typically when you look at university acceptance data, the GPA you find there is based on a simple calculation of grades. This simple calculation is what we call un-weighted, meaning there is no weight applied to courses like AP, IB, A-Level.

Therefore, an A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0 and an F = 0.0. So how is GPA actually calculated?

Let's say you have the following grades:

Grade 9	Semester 1	Semester 2	Grade 10	Semester 1	Semester 2
English	A	A		B	A
Math	B	A		A	A
Science	B	B		B	B
History	C	B		B	C
Language	A	B		A	B

For the sake of this example I have not included A+ or A- since this is an example of un-weighted GPA.

Take all of the grades:

$$A = 8 \times 4.0 = 32$$

$$B = 10 \times 3.0 = 30$$

$$C = 2 \times 2.0 = 4$$

$$D = 0$$

$$F = 0$$

Total = 66 (32+30+4 divided by (the total number of grades))20 = 3.3 un-weighted GPA . There it is, your un-weighted GPA. In order to get the most accurate calculation you must go through this whole process after each semester.

Some schools will want you to do this calculation for the application. Others will ask the school to send the GPA. But since you now know how to calculate it, you can provided in the appropriate space on applications that ask.

Another reason schools ask for a GPA calculation is so that they can get a sense of your class strength. At the beginning of each year the counselors at your school will break down your class, usually at the end of Junior year, into Quintiles or fifths. This way the schools can get a sense of where you lie amongst your peers in the class. Most international schools do not report Class Rank. The reason being that students in international schools come and go throughout the year. Once, there was a very bright student who came into a school and took the IB Diploma. By the end of Junior year she had the top GPA in her class. Was she Ranked #1? Sure. Was it fair since many of the other students had been at the school for one or two previous years? No, it was not fair and hence why international schools typically do not rank students. But, they do tell universities that they do not rank and the colleges know and understand the reasoning behind the decision.

So while everyone is worried about the numbers, what they should really worry about is making good appropriate choices in course selection and doing well in those courses.

3) Research Question number three: What will become of me?

What do the graduates do? How many go on to graduate school? What kinds of jobs do the students get when they graduate? What graduate schools do they go to? What percent go to med school, business school, law school, education, and Ph.D. programs? These are very important questions to get answers too. Going to school is about your future and how well the school you attend prepares you for that future. You would be surprised to know that the Ivy League does NOT always do the best in these categories. There are lots of schools that send significant numbers of students to the top Graduate programs, or have better job placement in good

companies. So, please, please keep an open mind.

4) Research Question number four: How much does it cost?

Money for tuition is a concern. While it may be nice to attend Swarthmore College, can your family afford the \$50,000 annual tuition? Do I have a minimum amount I can spend? Are the "public Ivies" Honors Programs (Indiana, Michigan, UVA, Wisconsin) a better value than a private college? Making choices has certain realities. While we may "want" something, we really need to focus on what we "need". Many people want an Ivy or Top education. But what does that really mean? There may be certain realities that cannot be overcome and family finances may be one of them. That does not mean you cannot go to a great school. You just need to be realistic.

Where can I find out more about international financial aid? Most schools talk about their Financial Aid on their websites. Be sure you are looking at the International section. Now, it is important to know that not every school offers aid to International students so you should always check to see what the policy states.

In the current financial situation, students are changing how they think about college. They have to since many families can no longer afford the high cost of private schools. So, where are they going - like any good consumer, they are looking at options that have always been there, great schools, offering great programs that are not Ivy League and do not cost as much.

VII. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

At this point you should have a good idea of where you are going to apply. So, now you need to know what to do. Before we start you need to know this: ALL OF THE

WORK YOU PRESENT ON AN APPLICATION MUST BE YOUR OWN. All of the school documents must come from official sources i.e. your school. Never, ever get some one else to represent you. We know there are lots of Agents out there who will do everything for you. That is cheating and lying. PERIOD. And it is false representation. Applying to university is something YOU do. Not an Agent, not your mother and not your friend of a friend. Applying is your responsibility. It is also your responsibility to make sure you meet all of the requirements for admission. It is apart of growing up.

You don't really need to know about the application process until the end of your second to last year in high school. But there are things you need to consider. But once you are ready and have your college list together it is time to consider several things:

- 1. Is there a school that you absolutely love above all others? Are you an appropriate candidate for that school (meaning you have the grades in the appropriate courses and the SAT and TOEFL scores)? If you meet these conditions, then you might be interested in applying Early Decision, Early Action or Priority (depending on the schools early options). Obviously, Early Decision requires more love than Early Action. Please be aware of each schools early program deadlines and policies.**
- 2. If you love all of your schools, which you should since you should never apply to a school you do not like, then you should apply regular admission to all of your schools. Again, it is your responsibility to know application deadlines.**
- 3. For rolling admission to the state universities or to the UC system, for the great variety of other early plans such as priority, VIP, quick response, use November 15 is your deadline.**

Please make sure your final list appears on Family Connection by the start of your final year in school. It is from Family Connection that we send the appropriate school documents – transcripts, letters of recommendation and any other document you need to send to complete your application from the school side.

***** SPECIAL NOTE! YOU submit your own applications online as soon as they are completed. The school components of your application are not your responsibility (i.e. transcript, letters of recommendation etc...) Regardless of our mailings, your applications should be sent as soon as you have completed them. Remember to save a photocopy of your completed application!**

a. Sending for Applications

Many colleges use either the Common Application or their own web based applications there is no need to request a hard copy. In fact, all of your applications should be completed online.

b. The Common Application can be used for over three hundred colleges. Most colleges have their own supplement along with the Common Application. Be sure you complete all of the required materials for each college you are applying to.

What is the difference between the Common Application and the schools own application (if they use both)? NOTHING. There is no advantage of using a schools application if they also use the Common Application. This is a major myth that has no truth to it. But, remember that information required for the Common Application may be different from their own application. However, be sure you are completing all the required supplements if you are using either the Common Application or the schools.

Please be aware that there are several types of common application. What we have been talking about here is The Common Application. (www.commonapp.org) but there are others. For example, the University of California uses a common application that is common to all of the schools in the University of California system. Many provinces in Canada use a common application for all the universities in that specific province.

The important aspects are these:

1. It makes your life a lot easier to use a common application.
2. If you make one mistake every school you apply to using a common application receives the mistake. So be careful.
3. Common applications provide you access to a number of different types of schools.
4. It may seem that by using the common application you can apply to as many schools as you want. Be aware that this may seem true, but schools know how and where you are applying. Common applications are not an excuse to apply broadly and widely. Do your research, pick your schools carefully and apply to no more than 10 schools.

c. Number of Applications

If you follow the plan you will start in the Spring before your last year with about 20 schools that sound the best to meet your educational, social and personal needs. These are schools you have researched and have an interest in. Over the summer you will narrow this down to no more than 10 schools. Our preference would be eight first choice schools. This does not mean the eight top schools in the world. Remember your list should have reach, mid-range, and safety schools, ALL first

choices.

Reach School – With my demanding courses, GPA, and SAT scores, this schools admission requirements are just out of reach. Not WAY, WAY out of reach but I am close.

Mid-range - I have a 50-50% chance of being admitted.

Safety – I am sure to get in (90%) as I exceed the academic admission requirements

It doesn't make sense to apply to a college just because you can get in. You will apply only to a college where you want to go. There is no sense in applying to XYZ College because it takes "everybody" and you want a place where you know you will get in if, in fact, you would never go there! We are working toward finding a final college list that is consistent with your ideal colleges and have a range of selectivity for admissions. You will want to include at least one or two colleges where you have a 90% chance of getting in but that you also love.

d. Deadlines - Early, Rolling, Regular

Here is a review of Admission policies because it always needs review. Before moving forward remember that any Early admission plan, you are expecting the school to admit you based on the grades you earned in your second to last year in school.

1. ***EARLY DECISION (ED)*** means that you apply early and receive an early reply, ***AGREEING IN DECEMBER TO WITHDRAW ALL OTHER APPLICATIONS AND ATTEND THAT COLLEGE if you are accepted.*** You may apply to only one ED school. **THIS IS A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT!** A contract you, your parents, and your counselor will sign and send to the school that states you understand the

conditions of Early Decision.

Ethical and moral issues arise around this process. You should know that your school stands firmly on every commitment that we make to every college. For Early Decision, highly selective colleges take from 30% to 55% of their freshman class, meaning the top students, *best of the best*, top SATs and grades in a rigorous program. If you are not at the top, but want the college to know it is your first choice, there are many ways to tell them: write it on your application, in your essay, and tell the admissions officer during your interview. It's not to your advantage to apply early, if you don't have a chance. You are not allowed second thoughts about other colleges if you are accepted Early Decision. Many applicants are denied altogether by mid-December, losing the opportunity to submit better test scores and higher grades earned during the senior year.

It's also devastating to be denied in December. Talk over the Early Decision possibility *carefully* at home and with your college advisor. It is a very important decision and needs to be considered completely.

2. *EARLY ACTION (EA)* is similar, although you are not committed to attend. There is no contract to sign. The risks are that you can be rejected on the basis of your junior year, and not deferred into their regular pool of applicants, and your chances of getting in from a deferred status plummets to 5% or less. *Priority applications* are similar but usually used by large State Schools to build a selective class.

3. *SINGLE CHOICE EARLY ACTION (SCEA)* is almost exactly the same as EA but because of Single Choice, you may apply to only this school early. Stanford is

an excellent example of a SCEA school.

4. **REGULAR DECISION** is what everybody applies for usually unless they are opting for one of the other mentioned application types.

5. **ROLLING ADMISSION** means your file will be evaluated as soon as it is complete. The turnaround time is about six weeks. So you can know pretty quickly if you have been admitted or not. Some colleges consider a complete file at the end of junior year and others wait for first term grades. Because many of the state universities have rolling admissions and students tend to apply early, many popular colleges may fill their housing on the main campus by January. The sooner you apply the better for rolling admissions. Essentially, at the beginning of the Rolling Admission process, the schools are more open to accepting a wider variety of students. As the school begins to fill up, the admission office becomes more and more selective.

e. College Essay

Up to this point everything about your application is complete. Your grades are in, you have taken SAT's and TOEFL, your teachers are writing your letters of recommendation. There is not much more for you to do except keep working hard in school.

The place where you can really shine is through the essays for your applications. The essay is probably *the* most important part of your application. This is the one place where you actually speak! This is where you let schools know how you think, what is important to you and what you have experienced. As with everything, make

sure you follow the directions AND answer the questions. Many of the colleges will require you to write from one to five essays, each. So you will have a lot of writing to do. Therefore think carefully about the questions asked of you and spend a lot of time formulating your answers.

This is your opportunity to communicate to the admissions committee is who the person behind the numbers (SAT and grades) is – i.e. the real you. Make sure you use Spell Check and have someone else proof read it. DO NOT have everyone in the world read your essays. It is very important that it is your voice in your essays. Your personal perspective, the words you use, your writing style needs to come through on your essays. There is a saying “Too many chefs spoil the soup!” This is very true when it comes to college application essays. Never, ever have someone else write these essays for you. Remind your parents when they are reading your essays that you are writing the essays not them.

There are sample essay questions on the common application. These questions never, if ever, change. An important tip - remember the essay is about YOU. The question may ask you to tell about an important person or event in your life or some similarly worded question. Do not tell a long story about that person or event. These essays should be about how that person or event affected you and helped you become a better person. You are writing to the admission committee and they want to get to know you better. Once the person reads your essays they should have a better idea about who you are, how you write and what you think.

When you want help with your essay, see your college counselor for content. See a classroom teacher for style ideas and correct grammar and spelling. Your college essay is your best opportunity to distinguish yourself among other applicants. You

have a chance to show your ability to think and write, and also what your character, values and aspirations are. It doesn't matter what the topic is, the essay should not be a description of events. Your college essay must tell how you feel about an event or activity and what you've learned from the experience. In other words, if you write about your trip last summer, or community service, don't spend the whole essay writing a travel log or describing the community service, tell the events in a short paragraph and use the rest of the essay to tell what you think of the event or experience or how you've changed because of it. Write about what you learned about yourself, the world and other people.

Some schools may ask you on supplements to write about why you have chosen that school. This is not the place to tell them they are the best school. They know that already. They want to know why you think it is the best school for you. What attracted you to apply? What about the education, the location or the programs they offer led you to apply?

Here are some college essay tips:

- 1) Count on writing several drafts before it is final.
- 2) Use all the standard rules of good writing. Be concise, be interesting, use a "grabber" in the first line or paragraph to catch the attention of the readers.
- 3) Don't try to write what you think the committee wants to hear. The readers are not looking for something in particular; they are looking to learn more about who you are.
- 4) Again, don't even think of having someone else write it for you, no one else can possibly communicate the "real" you. Besides that, *you* will learn who you really are. Writing is a learning experience that you need to practice.
- 5) The topic doesn't have to be dramatic, bizarre or unusual. You can write about

the most ordinary daily activity you do, or a story you read. It's what you learn and observe or how you've changed that counts. In fact, one school actually asks you to write an essay about a typically daily activity!

6) Never use the essay to tell why you have such poor grades, or how you know your next term will be better. An essay of excuses, no matter how valid, highlights your weaknesses. Your essay should always be about your strengths. If you feel you have a good reason for poor grades, discuss it with your college advisor. They are the person to tell the colleges the reasons in their letter of recommendation, not you.

7) You should know that the more selective the college, the more emphasis it places on the essay. Good colleges expect good writers.

8) Most important, remember that English isn't just for English class! Apply the good writing skills you have learned in class. Make the transition from writing assignments of analytical, expository, personal or argumentative styles to the writing of your essay. Tie in a literary reference, an object that you've read about. Integrating the personal statement with literature is an interesting way to write an essay. Be sure to support your essay with specific examples to bring emphasis to your essay.

f. Test Scores

YOU and only you are responsible for having your *official* test scores sent from The College Board (SAT) or ETS (TOEFL) to your colleges. Official scores cannot come from the school or your counselor. If you have not listed your colleges on your SAT/TOEFL/IELTS registration forms (the scores will be sent to four colleges which you designate at no extra charge), then you must go online, telephone or pick up additional score report forms in the College Advising Office. You must know your test registration number (found on the blue student copy, which contains your scores and which you receive in the mail. You can also find this information on your

College Board account webpage) and the code numbers of the colleges to which you are applying (found in the SAT registration bulletin). You will wait until you have your final list of colleges before sending scores.

By the way, you should know that if you are taking AP English, IB HL English or A – Level English, this does not exempt you from taking TOEFL. Though you may be doing well any one of these courses, depending on what is offered by your school, they do not satisfy the English language qualification requirement of the school. Though it does not truly make sense, the reason is that TOEFL or IELTS are standardized exams. While you could argue that the courses are standardized as well, schools look for the accurate reflection of international standards of English for non-native English speakers.

g. School Forms

1. **Teacher Evaluations** - There are several different types of schools forms. The first is called the **Teacher Evaluation or Teacher Recommendation**. For the **Common Application** it is called the **Teacher Evaluation**. This is where two of your teachers will write about you as a student. Each teacher will complete a form that asks him or her some questions about you. They complete some multiple choice questions that compares you to other students in your class or compared to other students they have taught during their career, along with some other questions. They will also write a letter with more detail about your performance in that class, what areas do you excel in and in what areas you need work.

Typically schools want a letter of recommendation from a **Humanities (English or Social Studies)** and **Quantitative (Math or Science)** teachers. It is important that you choose teachers who know you best and can really speak to your strengths. The

teachers you choose must be from the last two years of high school. You should not choose a teacher who taught you three years ago. Those teachers are too far removed from who you are because presumably you have changed and matured.

Unless there is a specific reason, you should not have more than two teacher letters or recommendations. Too many letters may look as if you are trying to prove or hide something. Follow directions carefully. If you cannot follow directions on something like an application, the school may worry there is something hiding underneath.

2. Secondary School Report, Counselor Report, High School Report – this form has many different names but know that this form is for your school counselor. Like the Teacher Evaluation, this form asks the counselor to complete some information not only about you as a student but also about the school you attend. Your counselor will also write a letter of recommendation that will not only describe you as a student but illuminate your leadership, athletic or artistic talents. It is also the place where any issues may be explained from an official point of view.

No matter who is writing and completing these recommendations for you, their job is to put you in the best light for the admission committee. They are also going to be realistic and not make you out to be Super Student unless you really are one. Universities know you are not perfect so they expect to read about your excellence as well as your flaws. You are, after all, human.

All letters of recommendation and their respective forms are confidential. They must be. As opposed to the UK, where letters are open, in the US letters are not shared with parents or students. In fact, when you apply to universities that expect

letters of recommendation you will see something like this:

IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE: Under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), after you matriculate you *will* have access to this form and all other recommendations and supporting documents submitted by you and on your behalf after matriculating, unless at least one of the following is true:

1. The institution does not save recommendations post-matriculation (*see list at www.commonapp.org/FERPA*).

2. You waive your right to access below, regardless of the institution to which it is sent:

Yes, I do waive my right to access, and I understand I will never see this form or any other recommendations submitted by me or on my behalf.

No, I do *not waive* my right to access, and I may someday choose to see this form or any other recommendations or supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf to the institution at which I'm enrolling, if that institution saves them after I matriculate.

(From the Common Application)

The basic principal is that you agree that you will not see the letter until after you enter school nor will you or your parents ask to see the letters. By waiving your rights, you are allowing teachers to be honest in their letters of recommendation.

If you choose not to waive your rights, your teacher will write a very bland letter that most likely will hurt your chances for admission. So, waive your rights, it is to your benefit, even though you may feel you are losing something. Have faith that your teachers are writing to help your chances for admission. And besides, if you have been a good student, what do you have to worry about?

Here are some pointers about teacher recommendations:

1) Nicely ask your teacher if she or he will write a recommendation for you.

2) Give the teacher the proper university or college forms filled in as requested. In other words, make sure all the personal biographical information about you is

completed. There is nothing worse for a teacher to find a form on their desk with no name on it! Your teacher will write one letter, copy it, and attach it to each of the forms for different colleges. Most of the time this letter will be uploaded to the online link to be submitted with your other school materials. *The same teachers will write all of your recommendations.* Give your teacher plenty of time to write their letter for you. Trust me when I tell you that if you ask your teacher at the last minute to complete forms and write letters they will NOT be happy and it may affect what they write about you. Give your teacher at least three weeks to write your recommendations. Respect the fact that they have other things to do – teach, grade papers and write other recommendations. They also have other things they want or need to do. So give them the respect they deserve.

3) Finally, after you hear from a college, let your teachers know where you got in. They have an interest in what decisions the colleges made. They helped get you in, hopefully! Be sure to thank them regardless of the admission decisions! They are pleased to write the letters for you, but want to be kept up-to-date with the results.

**** NOTE: If your school is using Family Connection it is important that you use the same password for the Common Application you used to register for Family Connection. This will ensure that the two programs align themselves and we can submit documents online. Be sure to *Waive Your Rights* on the Common Application or any school that asks. Your Secondary School Report form will be submitted to the college to meet your deadline along with the following:**

1. Transcript (including three and a half years of courses and grades)
2. Counselor letter of recommendation, signed by your college advisor
3. School profile (description of our school, information of test scores of your class, where previous classes have matriculated, and grade distribution).

If your school does not use Family Connection, then speak with your counselor about what you need to do to have your schools documents submitted electronically.

*****PLEASE NOTE*****

Submit your application as soon as it is completed; do not wait for the Secondary School Report (SSR) to go out. The sooner you submit your applications, the sooner you will believe that you are really going to college next year! Lots of students think that by waiting some miracle will occur. We are not sure what it is but it happens. Most of the time, students wait because they believe they are going to write the next Amazing Essay or that they have made some glaring mistake. It is important to believe in the process and let go. Submit your application.

Exceptions: There are a handful of colleges who will ask you to complete a “pre-application”. This is the first step and usually consists of biographical information. For these schools you must complete Part 1 of the application before you complete Part 2. As always, be sure to follow directions completely. Again, your application is your responsibility.

VIII. WHAT ADMISSIONS DEANS ARE LOOKING FOR

When you write your applications, consider what the college admissions deans are looking for when admitting their freshman class. If you have done your research properly you will know what kinds of information they are specifically looking for in the application. Remember, you want to stand out but you have to be true to your self and in what you present. If you tell a school you are at the top of your class they will know whether that is true or not by looking at your grades and SAT Scores. While they differ in whom they take, they all use the same basic yardstick in

evaluating their applicant pool.

a. General Evaluation

Generally speaking one or more admission members evaluate each applicant. Each student is given an overall rating. The rating number is then brought to a committee meeting, where an admissions staff makes a decision. There are usually six important parts to every applicant's file:

- 1. Transcript – strength of courses taken, grades earned**
- 2. Test scores – TOEFL and SAT I, SAT II (if you take them)**
- 3. Application and essay(s)**
- 4. Teacher recommendations**
- 5. College advisor's recommendation**
- 6. Other: interview, coach's ratings, special talent, outside recommendations**

Let's be clear about this evaluation- these six parts are *NOT* equal. Transcripts are #1 because that is the most important factor. PERIOD! There is nothing that counts as heavily as your transcript, that is, which courses you have taken and how well you have done. Colleges put your academic work at the top of their evaluation process because this is what you have done everyday of your high school career. Next are your test scores. Your SAT scores have been verified over time as a reliable predictor of college success when evaluated with high school grades. Your application and essay are very valuable tools in the evaluation process. They show how well you write and how clearly you think. A creative essay can easily distinguish you from your classmates. Recommendations are very important, as teachers are the only people who have had direct contact with you as a student. They can write about your curiosity, motivation, dedication, effort, and so on.

Because of that, you will want to choose teachers who you think will write the strongest recommendation you can get. Your Counselor letter is written by your college advisor and summarizes your academic work, speaks of your personality and highlighting your special talents. Interviews, activities and special talents are usually important but they will not substitute for meeting the academic requirements the college is looking for. Ever!

b. Standing Out... Special Talent

A special talent can make a big difference. We think of sports, because it's often the most talked about talent, but each of you has some special talent you will want to highlight on your own application. Some of you are outstanding musicians, writers, actors, poets, editors, photographers, and leaders. Others of you have a strong social conscience, or unique hobbies or an unusual background. Maybe being highly organized or committed to community service is your special talent. Admissions committees are always looking for the strongest points in your application, things that set you apart from other applicants. Your special talents are what make you interesting. Colleges love lop-sided students. Colleges look for a well-rounded class, *not* a group of well-rounded students. Distinguish yourself!

IX. COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

Taking the SAT is a big challenge for Mainland Chinese students. First of all, the SAT is not offered anywhere in China with the exception of Hong Kong. Because of this, most US universities and colleges do not require that you take the SAT at this time. However, if you can, you should think about taking the SAT. This will help you stand out and will give you the opportunity to apply or qualify for scholarships. The second reason it is a big challenge is the fact that the SAT is a US test. The

reading, grammar and terminology used on the test is very American. It can be very difficult for students unfamiliar with this kind of language to do well. Therefore, colleges don't expect that you will get a perfect score. What they want to see is how well you do. Colleges and universities do NOT want you to take time away from school to take SAT Preparation courses. All they want is for you to take the test and perform as best as you can. Take the test, see how you do and if you think you need extra help, speak with your counselor.

**** Remember – how you do in school everyday is far more important than how you do on SAT. There is no question that TOEFL or IELTS plays a significant role in the admission process. Plan to do well on this test.**

a. How to Apply for the SAT Tests

The SAT Reasoning Test is a three-hour and a half test that measures critical reading, math, and writing abilities. The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour tests in specific subjects. Subject tests measure the student's knowledge of particular subjects such as literature, foreign languages, mathematics, science, and history. Students choose which tests they will take.

Since the test is not officially offered in China unless you are an international student attending a designated international school, students who want to take the SAT must register using the registration form provided by your schools. It is important to meet the registration deadlines set by your school to submit your registration on time. **IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REGISTER ONLINE** for the SAT at this time from tests in the mainland. Be sure to use the exact same name each time you register for a College Board test and the name you use must match your passport name. It is a computer system that sends all of your tests together only if

you write your name and address exactly the same each time.

b. Test Centers

At the moment, SAT is only offered in Hong Kong at a specially designated testing center for Mainland Chinese students. There is adequate space for any student who wants to take the test to be able to do so. You do not need to travel to Singapore, Seoul or Tokyo to take the SAT.

If you are attending an international school chances are that your school is an SAT Test Center. Only students attending that school may test there. You will complete a registration form and hand it in to the counseling office.

TOEFL and IELTS are both offered throughout the year in Mainland China. You should register through ETS for the TOEFL and through British Council for the IELTS. Please know that either of these tests is acceptable for US colleges and universities.

Who takes the TOEFL or IELTS? Students whose first language is not English. It is not about what passport you hold or where you live. It is about your English ability. Most international students should take either one of these tests. Take the TOEFL or the IELTS any time during the spring of your Junior Year or over the summer before your final high school year.

c. When to Take the SAT Reasoning Test

For the sake of simplicity here is a recommended schedule for testing:

Junior Year/Senior 2

October – PSAT

December – SAT I

May – SAT I

June – SAT II

Senior Year/ Senior 3

October – SAT I

November – SAT II

Here is the reasoning behind this plan and some explanations.

If you take the PSAT in October of your Junior Year it is a good idea to take SAT I in December. Why? Well, since you just took the Practice SAT (PSAT) it is important to see how well you do on the real test. There should be a correlation of scores between the two types of tests. Second, with the PSAT you receive all the answers to all of the questions on the test. Plus you have the test book. So, you can easily see your strengths and weaknesses. You can see what questions you missed, what the content of the question was and the difficulty of the question. You get this for free and it is the best test preparation available. Spending some time reviewing the PSAT results will give you a very good idea what you need to work on to improve your SAT Scores. If you have taken the time to do this, then when you sit the SAT in May, you should do much better.

The other reason for taking the SAT in December is that it will help your college counselor review the colleges you are thinking about. Though grades are the most important factor, the next hurdle you need to overcome in the admission process is the SAT. Your counselor will know if you are on track with your college list.

Up to this point in the schedule you should have two SAT scores – December and May. June is a good time to sit SAT II if you need them. Not every school requires SAT II. However, those that do require them ask for either two or three SAT II scores. If you take a couple of SAT II tests in June you will have an idea what they are looking for on the test. If you score high enough on one or more of the tests, you are done. It does not make any sense to wait to take SAT II unless you are really not prepared for them. Let's say to take two tests in June and score really well on one of those tests. That is one test out of the way, so you can concentrate on the other subjects for your Senior Year.

Research shows that students do best on their SAT Subject Tests at the end of the course when they have prepared for final exams. Junior students usually take one of the math tests (there are two Math I and Math 2) and choose from science, literature or history – depending on their academic strengths, previous SAT Subject Test scores, and interests. Each SAT Subject Test is one hour; students may take up to three on any test day. Most selective colleges require two, rather than the previous three SAT Subject Tests in the areas of the student's choice, although math is usually required. It is the student's responsibility to research and know which colleges on her list require what tests. At this time six colleges, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Georgetown, MIT and Olin College of Engineering, still require three SAT Subject Tests for admission. The more academic disciplines that you can document on a national level, the stronger your record, and the wider your college choices will be. You are working toward the strongest record you can build, not the minimum requirement that the colleges say they want. When you are in doubt about which SAT Subject Tests to take, discuss the matter with your teachers and your counselor. They will consider your grades in the subject, your teacher's evaluation,

and how well you do on a practice test, so that an educationally sound decision will be made. The more areas you cover well in SAT Subject Tests, the stronger your record. This is of course, if you need to take the SAT Subject Tests.

g. Score Reports to Colleges

At the time you register for the SATs, you will have an opportunity to list four colleges by code number that you wish to have your scores without additional fees. There is an additional fee for sending additional scores to each college. YOU, not the school, are responsible for sending your official SAT scores to your colleges. All of your SAT scores go to the colleges. Most colleges use your highest scores; they usually look at the highest verbal and the highest math, not necessarily the highest set. If you send 7 SAT Subject Test scores, they will usually choose the top two or three. SAT scores are mailed directly to your home and to school in about three to four weeks after the test is taken. Scores will also be sent via the Internet to the colleges that you designate when you register for the test.

h. AP Tests

Advanced Placement tests are given in May. These tests are designed to measure your mastery of college-level work in specific courses. Senior scores on these tests have no impact on the college admissions process because the test is given after all admissions decisions have been made. Enrolling and doing well in an AP course, however, will show up on your transcript, and of course a Junior Year AP score of 4 or 5 is a strong academic credential for your college application. There is nothing that helps more in the admissions decision than doing well in schools most rigorous courses; some, but not all of our most rigorous courses are our AP's. Key words here are "doing well." Taking AP's for how they look on your transcript is not a sound principle for curriculum decisions.

i. Studying for SATs

There have been loads of studies on the effect of Coaching/SAT prep on SAT performance. Almost all indicate that becoming familiar with the test is a good idea. But they have found conclusively that doing well in school is the best test preparation.

There are other ways to achieve high scores on the SAT. Certain areas such as Reading Comprehension or math skills need the most attention. Sometimes focusing on vocabulary can greatly affect your scores. Some students choose to work with a private tutor or with a test review program. No matter what method is chosen, many of our students have seen score increases once they have made a commitment to take such work seriously. There are never any guarantees with such work since test taking is not an area where miracles occur.

Cramming the night before does not help. Instead of overwhelming your brain, get a good night's sleep. Be sure to eat breakfast. Prepare yourself for the SATs as you would for sports... get in shape – physically, intellectually, and emotionally!

Here is a tip:

Students with the highest SAT scores concentrate best for the full three hours. Others “get sick of the test,” slow down and often give up. Look at the clock. When you go into the third hour, eat some raisins or candy that you’ve brought with you during the break. Psyche yourself up, tell yourself you are just as fresh this third hour as you were when you walked in ... you’re young, three and a half hours of concentration is easy at 15 and 16! Chances are that you won’t be devastated with some horrible score as they almost always are consistent with your grades at school. Take each question as it comes and give it your best shot. The easy answers count

as much as the hard ones.

X. FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

When it comes to paying for college there is no question that it can be a financial burden to your family. With the current financial crises families are looking for a variety of ways to pay for the ever-increasing costs of university tuition. There are two forms of assistance you can receive to pay for school.

a. Financial Aid is for families who need money because they do not have enough money to pay. Need is the most important word in the previous sentence. Lots of people want Financial Aid, but in order to get Financial Aid your family needs to prove they cannot pay. In order to get an idea how your family will fare go to www.collegeboard.com click on either the For Students or For Parents tab then look for the Pay For College tab. On the left hand side you will find under Tools the **Calculator**. Your parents can enter their financial data in the section and see if they will qualify for Financial Aid. There are a few things to be aware of – 1. Many international families do not qualify for Financial Aid because of the company benefits given to families living abroad. 2. Not every school offers financial aid to international students. If you are American, it should be no problem if you qualify. If you are an international student, please check each schools' website to make sure there is money available for you. 3. The school will expect the family contributes some money for your schooling. But, they are not interested in forcing your family into bankruptcy so that you can go to school. They all will try to be reasonable in the Financial Aid award.

Financial Aid is typically a package made up of Grants, Loans, and Work-Study. A Grant is essentially free money. Loans are just like a bank loan, they need to be paid

back. Work-study requires that you find a job on campus in which you earn money to help pay for books, food etc...

If you apply for Financial Aid you will need to complete the appropriate form required by the schools. Some require the CSS Profile found on the College Board website. Others require the International Financial Aid application which can be found on the schools website.

There are two types of schools when it comes to Financial Aid: Need Aware and Need Blind.

Need Aware: This means that the school, when looking at your application will look to see if they can give you money based on your Financial Aid application. If they cannot meet your need i.e. give you the money you need, they will not accept you and obviously not give you money.

Need Blind: This means the school will not look at how much money you need and if they accept you will try to give you the money you need. In fact, the school will work to make sure they give you what you need.

b. Scholarships are monies based on Merit. This means you earn the money. Typically schools will look at your grades and SAT scores to determine whether or not you merit a scholarship. The best forms of scholarship come from the schools themselves. Most schools offer a wide variety of scholarships based on a number of factors. In most cases, by just applying to the school you have applied for scholarships at that school. In other cases you will need to complete a scholarship application for the scholarship you hope to win. This may include additional essays

and other information. It is important to check each schools website to see what the various forms of scholarship are and how you apply for them.

The nice thing about scholarships is that you do not need to pay them back. But you need to continue to be a good student. Many scholarships require that you maintain a certain grade point average. Scholarships can be Full ride meaning that you don't have to pay a thing to partial, meaning they are helping you pay for your schools costs.

XI. A SECTION FOR YOUR PARENTS

As parents you are probably very concerned about your child's college choice. You want your daughter to have the best possible education ... that's one reason you sent her to school in the first place. There is no argument that a good education is important. But it is also important for your child to be able to start making adult decisions. This is the first time they get to choose their future. You also know your child well. You know their strengths and weaknesses. You see them through loving eyes. Love them, but remember your child is about to go off and experience the world. They are no longer your little girl or boy. They are becoming adults and so, they are hoping that you will guide them in the college search and application process.

It is also important to remember that your child has his or her own unique way of seeing the world built on their life experiences. They are not you and you are not them. It is time to let them go. While that is hard, you cannot let your life experiences rule how they live their lives. What your child wants is to be able to make choices. They want to have the responsibility. So nurture them. Treat them

like an adult. Talk to them about your experiences, hopes and expectations. While you want the best for them, they have their own ideas about their future. Let them tell you what they want.

It is a hard balance to keep your expectations and let them choose their own path. Their college search process is not the time to put your child in a situation where they want live up to your expectations but know those expectations are not reasonable. Every parent seemingly wants their child to go to THE BEST School when in fact THE BEST School maybe the worst school for their child. The college process is the time to be realistic, well balanced and focused. You cannot live your failed dreams through your child by making them apply to a school that is beyond their means or capabilities.

It is important to remember there are no “Just Try” applications. Students today need to have the grades and scores to get in to the top colleges. If your child does not have the numbers to even be considered, think what that does to your child. First, your child has spent the last number of years of preparing for this moment. They have hopes and dreams. They are also anxious about getting into a university. Second, they have researched and found places that “Fit” their criteria. Then along comes a significant person who tells them they “Should” apply to a school that is beyond their reach. They now have the hope that they will get in because they want to please you. Then, finally, they do not get in to that school. So, not only have they worked hard in school, taken the tests, prepared the applications but also they have failed. More importantly, they think they have failed you, their parents, the folks they love the most. OUCH!

Please, please do not set your children up for failure. Instead, help them realize both

your expectations and their hopes. It will all work out.

b. College Visits

Chinese New Year break and summer vacation are good college visit times. Parents can take the responsibility for arranging a family trip and seeing different kinds of colleges. You don't need to see them all. It does not help anyone by only visiting one type of school or THE BEST schools. Everyone will fall in love with Ivy League schools. Be realistic. Colleges usually have students on campus the last week of August and the first week of September, a perfect time to see colleges, before classes begin at school. If you go to the campus with child, here are some things you can do while she is being interviewed or visiting with other students.

**** 1) Take the campus tour.**

**** 2) Look at the bulletin boards.**

**** 3) Ask to see a dormitory room on your tour.**

**** 4) Attend a class.**

**** 5) Have coffee in the student cafeteria or union.**

**** 6) Notice the overall impression you get of the college. What is the community feeling on the campus?**

When planning the trip be sure to take two things 1) a camera and 2) a laptop. Here is why. You will be visiting different kinds of schools and sometimes more than one school per day. One of the parents should be the designated photographer. As you all go around the school, take notes, take pictures etc... After the visit immediately upload the pictures to the laptop and label everything you remember. Take a few minutes to write down your impression of the school. DO NOT TALK to each other. Let everyone have some time to reflect on what they saw and heard. Then go on to the next school. Try to avoid conversation about the school you just saw. Let your

impressions settle. Do the same thing at the next school. At the end of the day before dinner each person on the trip should write his or her own summary of each school visited. Over dinner talk about the visits. Bring the laptop with all the pictures so everyone has a visual of each school. Trust us when we say schools begin to look a like. Pictures help keep things clear.

It is important to remember that what you as a parent sees will be very, very different from what your child sees on a campus visit. You will be looking to see how safe the school environment is, what the classrooms are like, what who are the most famous alumna, who are the professors etc... Your child on the other hand will be looking to see what the food is like, are the dorm rooms comfortable, how do the students dress etc... So, when you begin to talk about each school you visited, make sure you as the parent are keeping balanced in your perspective. You may love a school, they may hate it and vice versa. As always, remember you goal is to keep the conversation balanced and focused. Sometimes it will be hard to understand why your child likes a school. Perhaps they will not be able to communicate the reasoning. The school just feels “right”. Respect that but also at a later date and time bring that school in to a conversation. Things will change, they always do.

c. College Applications

Your child needs guidance in the application process but they really do want to take responsibility themselves. Look over the applications your child is working on, discuss the questions and encourage her to work well before deadlines. **DO NOT WRITE THE APPLICATION OR ANY PART OF THE APPLICATION.** All communications to the admissions office should come from your child. It will be to your child's disadvantage if you act more interested in the application than she does. If you get frustrated by the slow pace, or how calm your child appears to be about

college applications, contact your school counselor. The school will have specific deadlines and will be encouraging applications to be completed by a certain time. Your job is not to nag, but to keep a schedule. For instance, every Monday at dinner, ask – “so how are your applications going? The school deadline is coming”. Also ask them if they want you to review anything or if there is information they need. If they have not asked for a credit card number by the deadline, that is the time to get worried.

d. Student Responsibility

The last word is that it is important that your child feel free to make his/her own college decision in order to gain a sense of responsibility and independence. The college selection process is tough. It builds character. And heaven knows our students will need these traits and character to succeed in their first year away from home - your child's first year at college. So give them the responsibility and let them earn their own place in the college that fits them.

XII. FINAL NOTES

We hope you have found this guide helpful. It does not explain every little thing you need to know. It is meant to be a guide, a guide to help you understand the basic information and requirements. At times it is repetitive because we really, really want to make a point.

Following the guide is a vocabulary list to explain some of the words or concepts used throughout this guide. There are also words you will find as you read materials from, visit colleges or talk to college representatives. It is not a definitive list but you should find it helpful.

It is very important that if you have any questions seek the advice of a professional. Many people rely on nonprofessionals for information and that is how bad rumors get around. So, ask questions of your college advisor, a college representative.

Finally, it is very important to keep organized. Make a calendar of important dates. Make a schedule that you will follow to complete essays and applications. Don't wait until the last minute to start the process. Give the college admission process the respect it deserves.

Good luck and remember, this should be fun and interesting

Your College Advisor

XIII. Words to Know

Here is a list of common words you will come across in the application process or when you go to university. Some of the words are important now, some later. Regardless, you should be familiar with all of them.

Words in *italics* also appear elsewhere in the list.

Academic concentration

Specialization in one academic *discipline* or field of study is called "academic concentration"; also see "*major*."

Academic year

Usually this refers to the September-June school year. In some cases it refers to the entire year.

Accreditation

Certification that a school or an instructional *program* meets standards set by an outside reviewing organization. Many forms of *financial aid* are available only to students attending accredited institutions.

ACT The American College Test similar to SAT used in the admission process. *See SAT*

Admission

Approval for a student to attend an educational institution. The admission process usually involves an *application* form and may require *transcripts* or other supporting documents or test scores.

Admission Pool

The whole group of students who have applied to a school

AP Advanced Placement by College Board. College level courses found in high schools around the world.

Advisor

A member of the college *faculty* or staff who assists students with planning *quarter* or *semester* schedules as well as their overall *programs* of study. Advisors may also help with career planning. *See also counselor*

Application

The first step in requesting *admission* to an institution of higher education. Usually there is a form to fill out by a certain deadline; sometimes there is an application fee to pay. Different schools use different types of applications. *See Common Application, Universal Application*

Articulation

A formal agreement between high schools and colleges or between community/technical colleges and *baccalaureate* institutions, designed to make it easy for students to move from one educational level to the next without any gaps or repetition in their coursework.

Assessment

A method of determining a student's knowledge or skill level, such as an exam, often taken to find his or her best *placement* or starting level in a series of courses in English, foreign languages, math, or science.

At BCC, assessment also refers to determining skills and abilities as learning outcomes in the college's general education program.

Associate's degree

A *diploma* earned after successfully completing a required *program* of study in a community or technical college. It typically requires 90 or more *credits* and takes two years of full-time study. Some associate's degrees enable students to *transfer* to *baccalaureate* colleges and universities, others prepare students to go right into the workforce in a *professional/technical* field.

Audit

A student who audits a *course* formally *registers* and pays for it and attends class sessions but earns no *credit* and has no obligation to complete homework projects or take tests.

Baccalaureate or bachelor's degree

A college *degree* that can often be earned by following a four-year instructional *program*. A baccalaureate institution, sometimes informally called a "four-year college," is a college or university that is entitled to grant a baccalaureate or bachelor's degree.

Basic skills

Usually refers to a level of *competency*-specifically in reading, writing, and mathematics-which is required for successful *college-level* work in all fields of study.

Blue permission card

Required for enrollment between the end of open enrollment and the official count day (typically fourth and tenth instructional days of quarter). Must be obtained from instructor.

Campus

The land and buildings that a college or university uses for instruction or student services.

Catalog

A comprehensive resource listing college regulations, *program* and *course* descriptions, *degree* and *graduation requirements*, *transfer* requirements, and other essential information. Sometimes referred to as Course Catalog

Certificate

A document granted by a college or university indicating that a student has successfully completed specified *courses* and *requirements* (compare with *degree*, which usually requires more time and coursework).

Certification of Finances

This is a document required by colleges and universities for all international students. This document comes from your parents bank and basically states there is enough money for you to pay for tuition, dormitory and food expenses, travel, books and school fees.

Class

(1) A specific group of students meeting for specific instructional purposes. It can mean the whole series of scheduled meetings ("Dr. Owen is teaching two English Composition classes this quarter") or just one session ("we had a guest speaker in my Home Economics class today").

(2) Often means the same as *course* ("she's taking classes in Interior Design").

(3) A group of students who start at a school together and expect to complete their studies at the same time ("he's in the graduating class of 2003").

Class schedule

(1) A publication listing detailed *course* and *section* information (days, times, room numbers, etc.) for a specific *semester* or *quarter*.

(2) The specific courses that an individual student is taking or plans to take for a given semester or quarter.

College-level study

Curricula and instruction that assume the student has already mastered certain skills and abilities and has the level of commitment needed for *postsecondary* schoolwork. Compare to *developmental-level study*.

College-level courses at university are numbered 100 or above e.g. Biology 101 is a first semester class, followed by Biology 102

Commencement

The ceremony at the end of an *academic year* when students receive their degrees or diplomas (compare to *graduation*). Comes from the word “Commence” or *to start* meaning that students who graduate are ready to start the next part of their lives, usually work.

Competency

In "competency-based" *courses* or instructional *programs*, students must demonstrate certain skills and abilities (instead of just earning *passing grades* in classes) before moving from one level to the next or earning the final *certificate* or *degree*.

Core Courses

A set of courses the university or college feels are the basic information students should know. Typically, Core Courses are Liberal Arts but sometimes they may be specific to a particular program, department or field. See *General Education*

Counselor

A member of the college *faculty* who has special training in guidance and who assists students in academic or personal matters. See also *advisor*.

Course

(1) Often means the same as *class*.

(2) A planned sequence of instruction in a particular topic; may include class meetings, lectures, readings, demonstrations, exercises, assignments, examinations, etc.

Credit

A unit of measure for college work. Generally speaking, one credit hour represents one hour of classroom attendance each week for one marking period.

Credit load

The total *credit* value of the *courses* in which a student is currently enrolled. Typically a class may have 3 Credit Hours meaning the class meets for 3 hours per week for the marking period. Students normally take 12 credit hours per marking period or 4 courses

Curriculum

(plural: *curricula*)

(1) An established sequence of information to be learned, skills to be acquired, etc. in a specific *course* or in a complete instructional *program*.

(2) Collectively, all the courses offered by a *department*, *division*, or college.

Deadline

The date an application is due. Schools have different deadlines for different types of applications. See *Early Action*, *Early Decision*, *Priority*, *Single Choice Early Action*

Dean

An academic administrator or official at a school, college, or university, especially one with responsibility for students or *faculty*.

Deferral

Deferral refers to students who are not offered admission under an early application process. It means that the student has been deferred admission and will be reconsidered during the regular admission process.

Degree

A rank conferred by a college or university and earned by a student who has successfully completed specified *courses* and *requirements* (compare with *certificate*, which usually requires less time and coursework). i.e. Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree etc...

Department

An organizational unit within a college or university, offering *courses* dealing with a particular field of knowledge; for example, the English department.

Developmental-level study

Instruction that helps students improve their English and math abilities and prepare for *college-level study*.

At BCC, developmental-level courses are numbered 99 or below.

Diploma

An official document issued by a college or university indicating that a student has earned a certain *degree* or *certificate*.

Discipline

(1) A subject relating to a specific field of academic study.

(2) Correction or punishment for disorderly behavior on campus.

Distance learning or distance education

Instruction that is not time-or-place specific; can include correspondence courses, televised or videotaped lectures, online courses (internet and e-mail), etc.

Distribution requirements

Course *requirements* included in an instructional *program* to make sure that the student is well-rounded and gains some perspective outside his or her specific focus or *major*.

Division

An organizational unit within a college or university consisting of two or more related *departments*.

Doctoral Degree

A Ph.D is a degree earned after the Masters Degree. Ph.D's can be professors or actual doctors of medicine. Doctoral programs can take several years to complete depending on the area of focus

Drop

To cancel *registration* in a *course* after enrolling into it. Students often add and/or drop courses before settling on a *class schedule* for a particular *quarter* or *semester*. See also *withdrawal*.

Early Action (EA)

A type of application to a school that is earlier than the regular admission. Early Action usually is non-binding, which means if the school accepts you, you do not have to attend. Different from Early Decision. Also see *Single Choice Early Action*

Early Decision (ED)

Similar to Early Action, Early Decision is an early application. Students admitted in Early Decision must attend that school AND withdraw all other applications. You may apply Early Decision to only one school.

Elective

A *course* that is not required for a particular instructional *program*. Many programs require a certain number of elective *credits*.

ESL (English as a Second Language)

Usually refers to *developmental-level* instruction in English language skills for non-native English speakers.

Enrollment

(1) The process of signing up and paying for *courses* once admitted to a school. See also *registration*.

(2) The total number of registered students attending *classes* in a particular instructional *program* or the whole school.

Evaluation

(1) The process and standards by which an instructor judges a student's work and assigns a *grade*.

(2) The process of determining that a student has met all requirements to complete a *degree* or *certificate* and is ready to *graduate*.

Faculty

The instructors or teaching staff at a school. At BCC, librarians and *counselors* are considered faculty members along with classroom instructors.

FERPA (Federal Education Right to Privacy Act)

Enacted by the federal government, FERPA protects students' privacy and confidentiality by placing certain restrictions on the disclosure of educational records and information.

Final exam

Final exams are held the last week of each quarter or semester for credit students. The final examination shall make up no more than 33% of your grade.

Finals week

The last week in the academic quarter in which final exams are given. Normal class schedules often vary during finals week. Exam schedules are printed in the credit class schedule every quarter for student convenience.

Financial aid

Money available from various sources to help students pay college expenses. These funds come as *loans*, *grants*, or *scholarships* from the state or federal government or other organizations. *Work-study* is also a form of financial aid.

FYE (First Year Experience)

A new-student orientation designed to welcome students to a college or university and give them information on how to succeed in college.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

The application required for students to be considered for federal student *financial aid*. The FAFSA is processed free of charge and is used by most state agencies and colleges. There is an electronic form for each academic year. FAFSA forms are available on the website www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Freshman

A student first year student.

General education

A set of *course* requirements designed to help each graduating student achieve competence in a variety of learning outcome areas. Sometimes referred to as Core Courses

Grade

A formal indicator of a student's overall performance in a *course*, recorded on the official *transcript*.

Grade-point average (GPA)

The GPA is computed by multiplying the number value of the *grade* earned in each *course* (generally, A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0) times the number *credits* for each *course*, then dividing the result by the total number of credits taken.

Graduate Programs

After graduating with a Bachelors Degree students some times continue in Graduate Programs either at the Masters level or Ph.D i.e Doctoral Level.

Graduation

The formal completion of an instructional *program* or course of study. Students graduate after successfully meeting all *credit* and *course requirements* and other criteria set by the college or university (compare to *commencement*).

Grant

A type of *financial aid* that generally does not have to be paid back after the student leaves school. Grants are available through the federal government, state agencies, and educational institutions.

Honors

Courses which have a higher degree of expectation. Usually Honors courses are harder. Honors classes often require special admission procedures.

Honors Programs

Specific programs at a school for students of a high caliber. These programs may offer opportunities for research, working with highly regarded professors or other special offerings like special dormitories, seminars etc...

Incomplete

A temporary *grade* given to a student who is doing satisfactory work but is forced by illness or other emergency to miss an exam or a major assignment. The instructor and student arrange how and when the student will complete the work and have the "I" changed to a final letter grade. At BCC, the student must finish the incomplete work within one academic *quarter*.

Independent study

An arrangement that allows a student to earn college *credit* through individual study and research, usually planned with and supervised by a *faculty* member.

Internship

A supervised short-term apprenticeship or temporary job in a real-world setting closely related to a student's field of study. The student may or may not be paid but earns college *credit* for the work experience. See also *practicum*.

Junior

A third year student who has satisfied the requirements of Sophomore year.

Learning outcomes

What students are expected to know and to be able to do as a result of their experience at the college and, more specifically, as a result of completing their general education requirements.

Loans

A type of *financial aid* that must be repaid to the government agency or other lending organization when the student leaves school.

Lower division

The *courses* students are generally expected to complete during the freshman and sophomore years of a typical *baccalaureate degree program*. These courses are often numbered 100-200

Major

Specialization in one academic *discipline* or field of study. At BCC, this is called "*academic concentration*" in a particular subject.

Masters Degree

Masters Degrees are specific degrees one earns after graduating from a Bachelors Program. Masters degrees can be earned in one or two years depending on the course of study. Masters Degrees are in specific areas like Business Administration, Education, Law or Finance for example

Matriculation

When a student enrolls in a school by paying the tuition and other fees.

No-show

A student who *registers* into a *course* but neither goes to *class* nor officially *withdraws*. At BCC a no-show student will receive an "F" for the class on his or her *transcript*.

Noncredit

Courses or instructional *programs* which do not require extensive homework or examinations and which do not offer college *credit*. Students frequently take noncredit courses for *basic skills* improvement, job training or career enhancement, or personal enrichment.

Open admissions

The policy of some colleges to admit nearly all applicants, regardless of high school *grades* and admission test scores. It means different things at different schools. Community and technical colleges in Washington State admit anyone who is over 18 or has a high school diploma or *GED*.

Orientation

A program to help students familiarize themselves with a school or program (see *FYE*)

Pass/passing

At most schools, a student will earn *credit* and "pass" a *class* with a *grade* of "A" through "D." A student who earns an "F" grade fails the class and earns no credit. Different schools have different standards, so a student who passes a class with a "D" may or may not be able to use that class to meet *prerequisites* or fulfill *requirements*.

Placement

The appropriate level to enter a series of *courses*, based on the student's skills; often used in the context of *basic skills* subjects such as mathematics or English composition. See also *assessment*.

Postsecondary

Refers to all educational *programs* for students past high-school age; it includes community and technical colleges and job training programs as well as *baccalaureate* colleges and universities.

Practicum

A *course* that includes job-related activities and stresses the practical application of theory in a field of study. See also *internship*. Some schools offer Co-op Programs whereby a student studies, works, studies, works.

Prerequisite

A *course* that must be completed (often with a certain minimum *grade*) or a skill that must be demonstrated before a student can enroll in a more advanced course (for example, first-year French is a prerequisite for second-year French).

Priority Application

Some schools offer a Priority Application which is similar to Early Action just a different name for the same thing.

Professional/technical

A *course* or instructional *program* that emphasizes job skills training for a particular field of work; often called "occupational" or "vocational" education and often contrasted with "academic" or "transfer" education.

Program

A very general term used in many ways in a college or university:

- (1) The *courses* that an individual student plans to take.
- (2) The courses *required* to complete a particular *degree* or *certificate*.
- (3) The courses that make up a *department* or the departments that make up a *division* within the college organization.
- (4) Organized activities with a specific function.

Quarter

Some schools organize the *academic year* into three time main periods-Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters-plus a shorter Summer Quarter (compare to *semester*).

Records

Refers to all the information the college might keep regarding a student; it includes *registration* activity (*enrollment*, *withdrawal*, etc.), *grades*, payments, awards received, *financial aid* applications and award notices, and notes on *disciplinary* actions, as well as address, phone number, and student identification number.

Refund

Tuition and fees that are paid back to a student who has *withdrawn* from a course. At BCC, the amount to be refunded depends on how many *credits* the student is taking and exactly when the student dropped the course(s). The refund policy and deadlines are published in each Credit Class Schedule.

Register/registration

To sign up or *enroll* in a *course* or courses. "Registration activity" includes enrolling, dropping/withdrawing, choosing "*pass/fail*" in place of letter *grades*, making payments, etc.

Regular Admission

Students who apply at the same time as everyone else.

Requirements

Minimum standards defined by the college mandatory for admission, program entry, or graduation. See also prerequisite; distribution requirements; general education.

Resident

- (1) A person who lives in a dormitory
- (2) For purposes of calculating a student's *tuition and fees*, someone who has lived in the state for a specified length of time as shown by specified types of evidence.

Rising Student

A student who is at the end of a year and about ready to move to the next. I am a “Rising Sophomore” is something you might hear from a Freshman

SAT

SAT is an admission test used by most colleges and universities. There are three sections: Critical Reading, Math and Writing. The test is offered six times per year, Visit www.collegeboard.com for more information

SAT II

SAT II or Subject Tests are one hour tests in specific subjects. There are two levels of math, biology, Chemistry, Physics and many other areas. Not every school requires SAT II so, check with the admission requirements of each institution before you worry about SAT II. Visit www.collegeboard.com for more information

Scholarship

- (1) A type of *financial aid grant*. Organizations may give scholarships according to academic achievement, financial need, or any other basis. Usually there is a competitive *application* process.
- (2) A person's ability and expertise in a particular *discipline* of study.

Section

A specific *class* with its own particular days, hours, location, and instructor. A number of sections of a certain *course* may be offered during a *quarter*, each with different days, times, locations, and instructors but presenting the same *curriculum*.

Semester

Some schools organize the *academic year* into two main periods-fall and spring Semesters-plus a shorter summer semester (compare to *quarter*).

Senior

A student in their last year of school and who has satisfied all the requirements for Freshman, Sophomore and Junior year.

Single Choice Early Action (SCEA)

Similar to Early Action but schools with this admission process require that you only apply to their school early – whether it is Early Action or Early Decision.

Sophomore

A second year student who has satisfied the requirements of being a Freshman.

STEPP (Student Tuition Easy Pre-payment Program)

A financial management program for students to make monthly payments beginning prior to the start of the quarter and continuing through the quarter. The program is available for fall, winter, and spring quarters. The first payment for fall quarter is due August first.

Student Union

The place on campus where everything happens. There are often restaurants, bookstores, offices, lounges and other student centered places. The Student Union often has many names but is usually located in the central part of campus.

Syllabus

An outline plan for a particular *class*, including textbook requirements, class meeting dates, reading assignments, examination dates, and the instructor's grading standards, etc.

Term

A unit of time that can refer to either a *quarter* or a *semester*, depending on which system the college or university follows.

Thesis

A research paper sometimes required to graduate from a bachelors program. Students usually have to defend their thesis in an oral presentation in front of a faculty panel. Thesis papers are sometimes required in Masters programs and definitely in doctoral programs

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

A standardized test which assesses the English language abilities of students who are not native English-speakers.

Transcript

An official *record* of the *courses* and *semester* or *quarter credits* a student has taken at a college or university, the *grades* and *degrees* or *certificates* earned, and any awards and honors received.

Transfer

To move from one college or university to another and have the second institution recognize and accept some or all of the *courses* taken and *credits* earned at the first.

Tuition and fees

Tuition is a student's basic payment towards the cost of instruction at a college or university. Most institutions also charge fees for laboratory equipment and materials, computer use, parking, and other miscellaneous costs.

Undergraduate

A student who has not yet earned a *bachelor's degree*; also refers to the *courses* and instructional *programs* such a student enrolls in.

Underclassman

A student in the first two years of a school typically Freshmen and Sophomores

Upper Classman

A student in the last two years of school typically Juniors and Seniors

Upper division

The *courses* students are generally expected to complete during the junior and senior years of a typical-*baccalaureate degree program*. These courses normally start with 300 or 400

Wait list

(1) A designation some schools use in the admission process when they really like you, but do not have room in the class at the moment.

(2) A registration tool allowing students to put themselves electronically in the queue of a fully enrolled course. Students will be added to the course as openings occur until the third day of the quarter in the order that they appear on the list. Offers students a fair and consistent method of enrolling in a full class should openings occur. Students must remove themselves from the wait list if they decide not to pursue the course.

Waiver

An exception from a requirement, rule, or penalty. (To waive a right or a claim is to voluntarily give it up.)

(1) If a student meets specific criteria, the college may waive some of his or her *tuition* and *fees* (that is, some of the money owed to the college will be forgiven).

(2) If a student demonstrates certain knowledge and abilities, the college may waive a *course prerequisite* (that is, allow the student to take the class even though he or she hasn't completed the listed *requirements* for it).

Withdrawal

The process of officially *dropping* a *class* or classes after the *quarter* has started.

Work-study

A type of *financial aid* which pays students to work part-time, often on campus, during the *academic year*.