

Melrose High School Guidance Department

Guide to College Admissions



- *Inside Tips for Exploring Colleges*
- *Steps for applying to colleges*
- *Calendar of Guidance Department Events*
- *Guidance Department Resources*
- *Financial Aid Information*



Dear Students and Parents,

Thank you for taking the time to review the Melrose High School Guide to College Admissions Handbook. In the Guidance Department we are all looking forward to helping you through the process and removing as much stress as possible. This handbook is intended to help all students and their families navigate through the sometimes-confusing college admissions process and make smart decisions about their college education.

Student Responsibilities in the College Process

- Student is responsible for sending applications and test scores
- Student is responsible for coordinating teacher recommendations
- Early Action and Early Decision students must notify their counselors by October 15th
- Final College Application List due to counselors on December 1st
- Inform counselors of all applications being sent

Counselor Responsibilities in the College Process

- Counselors are responsible for developing a college list with students.
- Counselors are responsible for meeting with seniors once per quarter.
- Counselors will discuss the following topics with students.

Common Application

Scholarship/Financial Aid

College Essay

Short Answer Essay

Letters of Recommendation

College Specific Supplements

College Visits/Interviews

Standardized testing information (SAT, ACT, SAT II)

College planning

Sending transcripts

Online resources

Factors in College Admission

- Seniors may also visit the Guidance Department to schedule appointments for Mock Interviews and College Essay Reviews
- Counselors are responsible for sending transcripts, secondary school reports, and written recommendations to each school to which a student applies



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Major Differences Between High School and College

HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Schedule</u>	At least 30 hours/week of classroom instruction: regular daily schedule: attendance enforced
<u>Freedom</u>	Routines established and enforced by parents, school, community traditions
<u>Distractions</u>	Regulations at school and home limit number of distractions
<u>Discipline</u>	Demanded by parents and teachers
<u>Teacher-Student contact</u>	More frequent (5 days/week)
<u>Academic Support</u>	Parents, teachers, counselors often take responsibility and arrange tutors, etc
<u>Competition</u>	The focus on academic excellence at MHS prepares them for a competitive college experience
<u>New Status</u>	Student's status in academic and social situations often influenced by family/community factors
<u>Counseling</u>	Parental contact constant: personalized counseling by teachers and guidance counselors regularly and easily available
<u>Dependence</u>	Student told what to do in most situations: follow-up on instructions is usual
<u>Motivation</u>	Push to achieve and participate from parents, teachers, counselors, and longtime friends
<u>Value Judgments</u>	Often based on parental values: student frequently not given choices



Major Differences Between High School and College

College

<u>Schedule</u>	Usually 12 hours/week of classroom instruction: classroom attendance often not checked
<u>Freedom</u>	Student alone responsible for scheduling free time: time management skills needed
<u>Distractions</u>	Frequent distractions (parties, fraternities, sports) leading to neglect of academics
<u>Discipline</u>	Solely up to the student
<u>Teacher-Student Contact</u>	Less frequent (1 to 3 times/week)
<u>Academic Support</u>	Requested and arranged by student: student must be own advocate even if college offers academic support
<u>Competition</u>	More difficult since only stronger students go to college
<u>New Status</u>	Student in new situation; judged solely for himself and by his own behavior
<u>Counseling</u>	Parental contact limited and difficult; students must seek out counseling; often difficult to schedule and not personalized
<u>Dependence</u>	Student is on his/her own; much self discipline required; often to specific timelines, no follow-up, no warnings
<u>Motivation</u>	Student is on his/her own; push solely from within
<u>Value Judgments</u>	New dilemmas with serious implications/consequences involved; outside guidance often not available

Nuts and Bolts – Fall of Senior Year

1. Consult with your counselor

- Make an appointment with your counselor in September to discuss colleges you are researching.

2. Obtain application:

The Common Application (www.commonapp.org)

- Many colleges will use the common application. These colleges will often require one or more supplements, which are additional forms or essay questions exclusive to the college. Any college, which accepts the common application, will consider it as seriously as it considers its own institution's application.

Institutional applications (found on the college's website)

- If the school does not use the common application, you can either go to the college's website to access it, call the college to request an application, or attend a college fair and obtain one from a college representative.

3. Application Instructions:

- When you receive the application, read the directions carefully. If there is something you do not understand, ask your counselor for an explanation. We recommend completing applications online (often for reduced or waived application fees).

4. Deadlines for the Guidance Department

- In order to have your transcript and recommendations sent, please submit the following to your counselor by October 15th for Early Decision/Early Action and by December 1st for the complete list.
- The Melrose High School Transcript Release Form signed by you. Forms are available on the Melrose High School Guidance Department website and in the Guidance Office.

Types of Admission Plans

Rolling Admissions

- No application deadline
- Don't wait until the last minute-spaces and/or majors can fill up
- There is often a "**priority date**" such as March 1st
- Students are notified of decisions on a rolling basis
- You have until May 1st to make a decision

Early Decision (ED)

- Allows student to apply to his/her first choice school in November or December. Notification of decision will generally arrive in late December.
- Early Decision is **binding**.
- If the student applies ED and is accepted, he is **ethically bound** to promptly withdraw applications to other schools and attend the accepting school.
- The enrollment deposit is due soon after the acceptance is received.

Early Action (EA)

- Much like ED **EXCEPT** it is **NOT BINDING**. The student is not asked to withdraw other applications if admitted.
- A student may apply to as many Early Action colleges as he/she would like.
- You don't have to decide until May 1st

Single Choice Early Action

- Used by only a few highly selective schools. You can only apply to one college early, but the decision is not binding.

Regular Decision

- Decisions made in response to applications submitted at regular deadline.





Timetable of College Planning – Junior Year

September

- Register for fall or spring SAT Prep course.

October

- PSAT/NMSQT exam administered at MHS.

December

- PSAT/NMSQT scores are returned.
- Read PSAT/NMSQT interpretation booklet.
- Take SAT if you've registered.

January

- Register for the appropriate SAT I and/or II. For most students it is a good idea to take the SAT I's at least once during junior year
- Take the SAT if you have registered for it.

February

- Check the deadlines for SAT I and SAT II registration.
- Register for April, May and/or June tests.
- Many selective colleges require SAT II tests in Math Level I (or 2) and one or two more of your choice.
- Consider whether to register for the ACT test.
- Visit colleges during February vacation.

March

- Meet with your counselor.
- Junior parents attend College Night.

April

- Read this booklet "Guide to College Admissions".
- Visit colleges during spring vacation.
- If you have not already done so, meet with your counselor to develop an initial college list.
- Take the SAT if you have registered for it.

May

- Take the SAT if you have registered for it.
- Ask Junior teachers for recommendations.
- Take Advanced Placement Exams if you are enrolled in these courses.

June through August

- Take the SAT if you have registered for it.
- Visit Colleges.
- Have interviews if possible at this time.
- Register for the October SAT.
- Begin working on applications.
- Write draft College Essays.

Timetable of College Planning Senior Year

September

- Register to take the October or November SAT I or SAT II's.
- Complete registration for the CSS Profile (for financial aid) online.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss college plans.
- Early Decision and Early Action candidate – see your counselor immediately and make decisions about where to apply. Ask teachers to write letters of recommendation and provide them with all the necessary materials. Request that SAT scores to sent by the College Board to the colleges to which you are applying.
- Consider having a Mock Interview.

October

- Attend Reading College Fair – co-sponsored by Melrose High School at The Shriner's Auditorium in Wilmington.
- Remember, senior grades are very important. **Work Hard.**
- If you are applying Early, you must complete a Transcript Request Form by October 15th, and give it to your counselor.
- List colleges to which you plan on applying. The guidance department recommends that most students consider applying to 5-8 colleges.
- Request that SAT scores be sent by the College Board to the colleges to which you are applying (www.collegeboard.com).
- Ask two of your teachers (ideally from junior or senior year) for letters of recommendation.

November

- Take the Sat I or SAT II if you have registered for it.
- Attend the Financial Aid Presentation evening at MHS with your parents.
- Send in you Early Action, Early Decision and Rolling applications.
- First quarter grades are automatically sent to all colleges to which you have applied.

December

- **Give the complete list of colleges to which you are applying to your guidance counselor by December 1st.**
- Take SAT I or SAT II if you have registered for it.
- Complete all of your applications December 1 (goal)
- Request that the College Board officially send your SAT scores to all of your colleges.
- Mid-year grades are sent to all colleges to which you have applied so you should continue working hard to earn good marks.
- Please write thank-you notes to the teachers who have written your recommendations.

Timetable of College Planning Senior Year (Cont.)

December

- Register for the AFL-CIO Scholarship Exam. The Exam consists of 40 multiple choice questions about labor unions and offers generous scholarships.

January

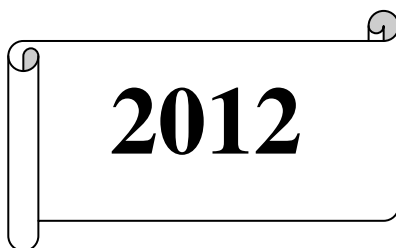
- Complete and file the FAFSA and CSS Financial Aid Profile (if needed) as soon after January 1st as possible. We recommend filing both of these forms online. You must file the CSS profile online.
- Complete financial aid forms for colleges that require their own applications.
- Listen for announcements of local scholarships and research them on your own (place of employment, organization in which you or your parents belong, the local public school).
- Check Guidance Office for private scholarships and application information.

February and April

- Colleges will begin to inform you of their decisions.
- Attend accepted student open house programs to help you make the final decision.
- Inform your counselor about decisions you have received from colleges.

April through June

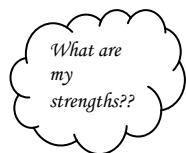
- Inform your counselor of the college that you will attend. A final transcript will be sent by the Guidance Department to that college in June.
- During second semester of senior year, maintain or improve grades. Colleges will look unfavorably upon grades that dip in the second half of senior year, and they have been known to require a student to go to summer school, put him/her on probation, or even reverse his/her acceptance.
- When you have made a final decision, reply to that college and inform other colleges so that your place may be given to someone on the wait list.
- Send deposit to college by May 1st to reserve your place in the freshman class.



Finding a College that Fits YOU!

When considering which schools you will apply and potentially attend, many things must be considered. The most important of these considerations should be **YOU**. The colleges you choose to apply to should be able to help you meet your goals and provide the environment you need to thrive.

The following questions can help you focus college selection and admission where it belongs-on you as an individual. An honest and thoughtful self-evaluation can reveal what you should look for in a college and prepare you for the statement you will be asked to make about yourself in essays and interviews when you apply. A serious look at yourself will help you find the colleges that are right for you and will help you present yourself effectively to them.



- What are my post-secondary goals?
- How will college help me meet my goals?
- What am I most looking forward to about college?
- What resources will I use to learn about college?
- Which colleges offer what I'm looking for academically and personally?
- Which colleges will I visit?
- What are my academic credentials (grades, GPA, test scores)?
- What non-academic strengths do I have to offer?
- Which colleges admit students like me?

As you approach the end of high school, answers to these questions may evolve and change. Your own expectations and assumptions, as well as those of family and friends, may pull you in various directions. It's important to examine the path you are on.

Tools to Help you Determine Which College will be a Fit for You

Naviance Career Interest Profiler provides students with the opportunity to explore a variety of potential careers that may peak their interests. Through completion of the survey, students are provided with a list of occupational fields that are aligned with their personal interest. The information provided by the Interest Profile is intended to provide students with more information about potential career paths: it is not intended to limit future horizons or aspirations for students.

Your Counselor

Counselors at Melrose High School are all experienced and knowledgeable with regards to finding the right college for you. You should rely on them to help you find the best college for you.

Sources of Information about Colleges

Naviance

<https://connection.naviance.com/melrose>



The Family Connection of the Naviance program provides a huge amount of information. Your counselor will instruct you on how to use the program. Information about colleges, acceptance trends, and information regarding career planning is all available through Naviance.

College View Books, Catalogs and the Internet

Many colleges send copies of their view books and catalogs. Students may also write to colleges and request that information be sent to them. Some colleges make this type of information available in a video/DVD format. Also, each college has their own website, and these sites are generally an excellent source of information.

College Fairs

Fairs offer fine opportunities to receive first-hand information regarding a number of institutions in a short period of time. To get the most from your visit, prepare in advance. Consider the types of schools in which you are interested and be ready with specific questions to ask representatives. The Guidance Department encourages parents to attend College Fairs with their students.

College Visits

No publication, no matter how thorough, can give you a complete picture of a college or university. A campus visit is the best way to find out what a college is like. Junior year (if not before) is the time to begin these visits. School vacation periods or the summer between junior and senior year can be used effectively for this purpose. However you will not be able to sit in on a class or stay for an overnight visit over the summer. If it is possible, plan your visit for a time when students are on campus.

When you have decided you would like to visit a campus, email or call the admissions office to tell them the date(s) you would like to come and the approximate time you expect to arrive. If it is possible to stay overnight in a dormitory, and you would like to do this, let the admissions office know at least two to three weeks in advance. If you have a particular interest in a major, let the admissions office know, and they will try to arrange a meeting. This approach may also be used to contact a coach. College visits should not be scheduled on days when you will have to miss class beyond the three-day allowance.

If you are an athlete who is being recruited by a college, this policy also applies to you. In addition, you ought to check the N.C.A.A. (NCAA.ORG) recruiting guidelines which are available online.

Some suggestions:

- It is important to research the college prior to your visit. The more knowledge you have, the more discerning you will be and the more you will be able to articulate your interest in the institution.
- Set up an interview time with an admissions officer if that is appropriate. Read the section in this book on the interview process to help you prepare.
- Arrange to take a campus tour.
- Attend an information session.
- Soon after the visit jot down some notes on what impressed you about the school.
- Also note any particular likes or dislikes you had about the school.
- Pick up a copy of the campus newspaper. It will tell you a great deal about student life, especially letters to the editor and the police blotter.
- Eat in the dining hall and talk to students.
- If you visit when the school is not in session, and you are impressed, you may want to set up a return visit when students' are on campus.

Should Your Parents Accompany You?

This is up to you. Parents often are interested in seeing their child's colleges. Most colleges welcome parents. However, during the interview, admissions officers like to have some time alone with the candidate and then invite parents in for a further word if they wish. Students should introduce their parents (and anyone else they're with) to the interviewer when he/she greets your group.

Should I Apply Early? And Application Advice

Should I apply early? Consider the following questions:

- Is this my first choice? Is it a great match?
- Have I done the appropriate amount of research?
- Do my GPA and standardized test scores meet the requirements?
- Can I attend the school regardless of the financial aid package they offer?

Applications and the Common App



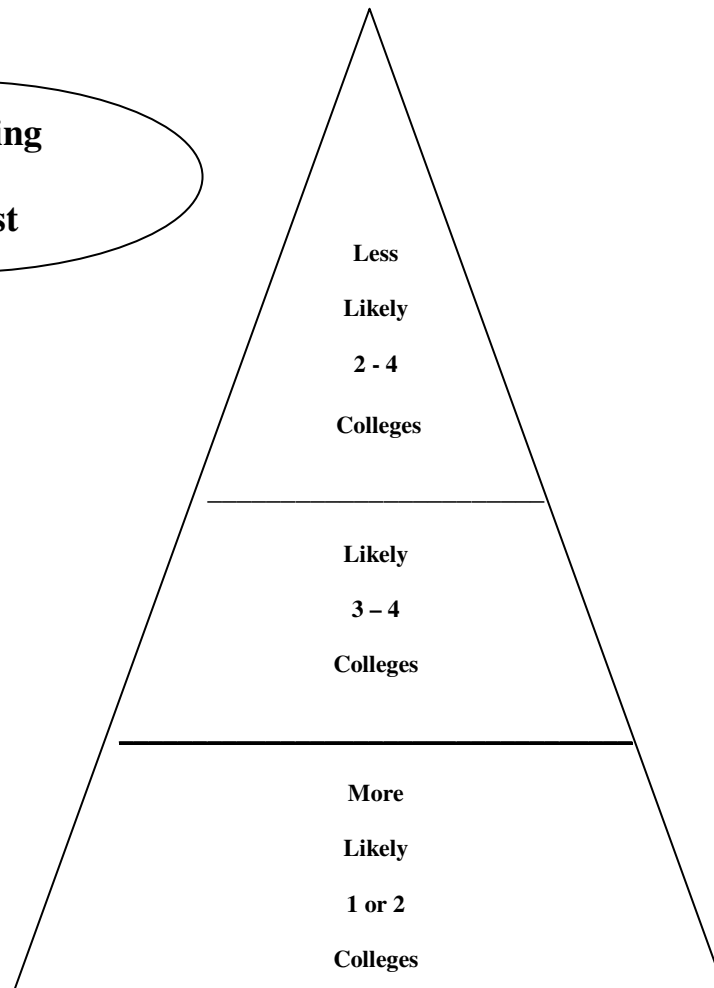
Application Advice

- Start collecting applications over the summer
- Make a copy of applications and use them to practice
- Use the application as an opportunity to make a nice impression and present the reader with the best version of yourself possible.

The Common Application

- Accepted by many colleges instead of their own application
- Student only fills out one application that can be submitted to multiple schools
- Many schools have their own supplemental forms

Developing Your List



Developing Your Final List

In early fall of your senior year, you need to be narrowing down your initial list to your final list. Your counselor will help you develop your final list using the framework above:

- 2 or 3 colleges ***less likely***...colleges you find attractive where you think you have some chance of acceptance but it will be difficult (your SAT and GPA are lower than the average student accepted).
- 3-4 colleges ***likely***...attractive to you, with a good, solid chance of acceptance (your SAT and GPA match those of the average student accepted).
- 1 or 2 colleges ***more likely*** to be accepted...very appealing; chances are excellent to sure (your SAT and GPA are better than the average student accepted).



Teacher Recommendations

Ask the teacher(s) at least three weeks in advance of the deadline. We recommend asking the teacher(s) in early September for Early Decision/Early Action application, or October for regular deadlines in January or later.

In a two pocket provide the teachers with following:

- A completed recommendation self-assessment form given to you by your counselor.
- The Teacher Evaluation form from the Common Application or the college's own Teacher Evaluation form with all basic student information completed and signed.
- Please write a thank-you note – writing and sending recommendations are a lot of work!

The Ten Most Common Errors Made on Applications

1. Allowing mistakes in grammar and spelling to slip through on the application.
2. Sending in an application marred by erasures, crossed-out words, and whiteout sentences.
3. Selecting a major the institution does not offer. Students can find out what majors a college does offer by looking in the college catalog or on Naviance.



4. Mentioning every school-sponsored club or activity the applicant ever had contact with, instead of only those in which he has actively participated.
5. Not completing the required supplements if applying to a college using the Common Application.
6. Not addressing why certain grades or semesters are poor (in a cover letter or through sharing personal story in essay).
7. Not following up to make certain that all credentials required by the college have been received: transcript, recommendations, and test scores, in particular.
8. Failing to send the processing fees with the application.
9. Submitting the application after the stated deadline.
10. Not having your SAT/ACT scores sent officially from the testing agency.

Preparing for Standardized Testing

Preliminary SAT (PSAT)
National Merit Scholarship Qualifying test (NMSQT)

The PSAT/NMSQT is a two hour and twenty minute version of the College Board SAT Reasoning Test, which measures critical reading skills, mathematical problem solving skills and writing skills important in successfully completing college work. Melrose High School students take the test in October of sophomore and junior year.

The most common reasons for taking the PSAT/NMSQT are:

- To receive feedback on your strengths and weaknesses on skills necessary for college study. You can then focus your preparation on those areas that could most benefit from additional study or practice.
- To see how your performance on an admissions test might compare with the test requirements of a college.
- To enter the competition for scholarships from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.
- To help prepare for the SAT. You can become familiar with the kinds of questions and the exact directions you will see on the SAT.
- To receive information from colleges when you check “yes” to Student Search Service.



Score Reports:

The PSAT/NMSQT test reports a Critical Reading, Math and Writing score on a scale of 20 to 80. By adding a 0 to a given score, a student can estimate his approximate SAT score, give or take about 40 points. A Selection Index with a scale extending from 60 to 240 is also provided (this is determined by adding the Writing and Verbal scores to the Math score). The Selection Index is used by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation to determine candidates for the scholarship programs that they administer.

Testing Programs Used for College Admissions

College Board Examinations – THE SAT’S

College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) tests are required for admission by many colleges. The two most common tests offered by the CEEB for college admission are:

THE SAT I (also known as the SAT Reasoning Test)

The test is a 3 hours and 45 minute examination, which measures the student’s ability to communicate and to reason with words and abstract concepts. A Critical Reading, Math and Writing score will each be in the range of 200 to 800. The three scores added together will make the combined score which will be in the range of 600 to 2400. The SAT I can be taken in December, January, March/April, May or June of junior year and again in October, November or December of Senior year. The fee for each test date is stated on the application. To register go to www.collegeboard.com

SAT II (also known as the Subject or Achievement tests)

These are 1-hour examinations, which measure the student’s level of achievement in certain subject areas. Some of the more selective colleges require or recommend two to three SAT II tests for admission and/or placement purposes. You may take up to three tests in one day. If you are planning to take SAT II tests as a junior, you should take these tests in May or June of Junior Year. Tests are in the following subjects:

Literature

US History

World History

Math Level 1

Math Level 2

Biology

Chemistry

Physics

French (reading only)

German (reading only)

Italian (reading only)

Latin (reading only)

Spanish (reading only)

Chinese (reading and listening)

French (reading and listening)

German (reading and listening)

Japanese (reading and listening)

Korean (reading and listening)

Spanish (reading and listening)

Modern Hebrew (reading only)

Testing Programs Used for College Admissions

**College Board
Examinations –
THE SAT'S AND
ACT'S**

**The Melrose High
School College Entrance
Board (CEEB) Code
Number is:
221375**

**You will need this
number when filling out
the registration forms**

American College Testing Program (ACT)

ACT examinations are required for admission at some colleges especially in the West and Midwest. They also can generally be submitted as an alternative to the SAT (sometimes as an alternative to both SAT I and SAT II and sometimes as an alternative to just SAT I).

Students should carefully check the admissions requirements at prospective colleges to determine whether ACT tests are required, or whether the SAT I would be acceptable as an alternative. The ACT is a four-part test (English, Math, Science, writing) of the abilities, which students will need to succeed in college study. It includes an optional writing test, which you should definitely take to make your results as complete and informative as the SAT.

See your Guidance Counselor for a conversion chart and for more information and registration materials for the ACT. To register go to: www.actstudent.org.



The College Essay

The essay is important, both to you and to the college. According to one admission director. “It makes the facts in the student’s folder come alive for us. Because it is the student’s personal statement, no single piece of admissions evidence gets as much attention and provokes a much discussion.”

The essay is your opportunity to take charge of the information the college receives about you. And to provide information that does not appear in grades, test scores, and other materials. It allows you to reveal your intelligence, talent, and sense of humor, enthusiasm, maturity, creativity, uniqueness, expressiveness, sincerity, and writing ability-traits that count in the admissions evaluation. Whatever the topic, the care and attention you give it will express the level of your motivation and how much you care about the college.



What do colleges look for?

Generally speaking, the admissions staff will evaluate your application essay on three levels:

- **Level 1:** Your ability to use standard written English that is correctly written, punctuated, and contains correct grammar, usage, and syntax.
- **Level 2:** Content, substance, and depth of insight that reflects your ability to think about yourself and the world around you and to convey your true feelings or opinions about a topic.
- **Level 3:** Creativity and originality. “It is at this level,” according to a dean of admissions, “that students can position themselves as unique, as individuals who would bring a freshness of vision and viewpoint to the college that will enhance the quality of its academic life. It is important to be yourself when expressing your uniqueness”.

In its essay directions, a college may ask you to do one or more of the following:

- DESCRIBE your uniqueness as a person, or tell something about yourself that can’t be learned from other information in your application.
- DISCUSS something that has contributed significantly to your growth.
- COMMENT on your goals and aspirations and tell how you expect the college to help meet them.
- EXPRESS your imagination, originality, opinions, or feeling on a specific topic.

REMEMBER: ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS CAN ONLY SPEND ABOUT 15 MINUTES PERAPPLICATION FOR THE INITIAL READING AND THEY HAVE HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS TO GO THROUGH. YOU HAVE TO GRAB THEIR ATTENTION QUICKLY!



Essay Writing Tips

- Plan your essays during the summer before your senior year, or early in your senior year. Allow yourself enough time for all the steps below.
- Be sure you understand the college's directions, and deadlines, and look on its website or in its guidebook for descriptions of the personal qualities it is looking for. One selective college, for example, seeks "candidates whose qualities of intellect, initiative, and energy demonstrate desire for both intellectual and personal fulfillment." An essay for that college should demonstrate and persuade the institution that you have those qualities.
- Before you start your essay, jot down your aspirations and how you think the college will help you meet them. Then develop a personal inventory. Make lists of your civic and school activities, your travels, awards, honors, other accomplishments, work experiences, any academic or personal challenges you are trying to overcome and the traits you value most about yourself. To focus your essay, develop a one-sentence theme from your inventory.
- Think about the form you might use to convey your information. Straight prose is fine, but if your theme lends itself to another approach, try it.
- Now write a draft. Set the draft aside for 24 hours, then read it to spot clichés, triteness, vagueness, dullness, grammatical errors, and misspellings. Does your essay focus on your theme, or does it ramble? Is it confusing, or boring? Does the introduction "grab" the reader? The essay should be approximately one to two double spaced pages. Beware of writing about overused topics.
- Rewrite your essay based on this evaluation and revise it as much as necessary.
- Ask someone whose opinion you respect to read your essay and give you his/her candid impressions. Ask for specifics, but do not let this person rewrite your essay. "Tell me what you think I'm trying to say. How do I come across as a person? What parts confuse you? Where do you need more details? What parts bore you? Tell me the parts you like best".
- If this draft is the best you can do, polish it by checking again for spelling and grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, inaccurate usage, unnecessary words, or anything else that does not sound right to you. Read your essay out loud to locate the rough spots.
- Write your essay on the computer – unless the college requires a handwritten version, and proofread it several times to catch any errors.
- Mail or submit your essay on time and relax. If you have done all the above, you can be relatively sure your efforts will be noted with appreciation.

The College Interview

Admissions interviewers generally have three goals when interviewing students.

1. To answer the question: Is the student a “good fit” for the college?
2. To answer the question: Is the college a “good fit” for the student?
3. To get information and impressions of the student that would not otherwise be discernable from the application.



If you request an interview or if an interview is required, you should prepare in advance. Interviews will be more important at some colleges, especially smaller ones, than others. If one is required, be sure to have it or it could hurt your chances of admittance. You should review the college’s website so that you will know something about the school and will be prepared to ask questions which are not answered in the catalog. Your dress for the occasion should be tasteful, neat and clean. All cell phones must be turned off! Take an unofficial copy of your transcript and resume with you to an interview. Arrive on campus well before the appointed time. This will give you the opportunity to see a little of the college on your own. If it is a large campus, it will give you time to find the admissions office. Be yourself at all times-honest, sincere and interested. Follow up with a personal (it may be hand written) thank you note to the interviewer referring to some specific topics you covered in your conversation.

The interview is not a quiz to determine how much you know or an occasion to give you an on the spot admission decision. Its purpose is to enable you to learn about the college and for the interviewer to learn more about you. You cannot predict the subject matter of the conversation nor can you remodel your personality for this special performance. It seems that each college interviewer has his or her own particular style of conducting an interview.

Any information that you have written on the application form should be confirmed at the interview. Any discrepancy will cause the admissions office to question your honesty. The most impressive type of student is one who is confident, responsive, prepared, honest and able to carry on an interesting, informative conversation.

Attitude is the key. An interview is meant to be a conversation. Offer a handshake. Be prepared to take an active role in the interview. At the start: rise to greet the interview, call him or her by name, give the person your name and introduce them to any family members who are with you. Arrive 15 minutes early and be courteous to secretaries or receptionists. Come prepared with three questions to ask the interviewer. It’s OK to read the questions from a piece of paper at the end of the interview. It shows you have done your research and are well prepared.

Interview Tips and Follow-up Steps

Some sample questions an interviewer may ask:

- How would friends, family, teachers describe you?
- What do you do outside of school?
- What newspapers and books do you read? What are your views on current events?
- What courses are you taking and how are they going?
- Do you have a part time job? Tell me about it.
- What is the most significant activity in which you have participated?
- Describe your high school – progressive, challenging, conservative?
- Why are you interested in our institution?
- What major do you intend to follow? Minor?
- What are career areas you have considered?
- Are there any downward trends in your high school grades and if so, why?
- What are you looking for in a college?
- What will you bring to our college community?

Questions you may wish to ask in your interview:

- What makes your college distinctive?
- What kind of student is a good match for your institution?
- Will I have access to a computer (or other special equipment or facilities) as a freshman?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your advising system?
- What kinds of campus jobs can I get if I qualify?
- What is the freshman/sophomore retention rate? If students leave/transfer, why?
- Are you an alumnus/a? If so, what did you like best and least about your experience.
- Why do you like working here?
- Can you give me some examples of school traditions or school spirit?

Following the interview:

At the end of the interview, thank your interviewer for speaking with you and ask for his/her business card. Make notes on the interview and the campus visit in general soon after the appointment. Include your likes, dislikes and key points to remember. Be sure you got to remember the name and title of the interviewer. Write a note of appreciation to the interviewer.



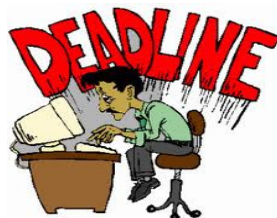
Financial Aid to Meet College Expenses

There are many possible sources of financial aid available to students in order to meet college expenses. The Federal Government and others by states, localities, businesses, individuals, associations, and other private sources sponsor some programs.

College costs have increased dramatically in recent years (ranging from several thousand dollars per year for in-state tuition within the State University or Community College system to upwards of \$50,000 per year at private four-year colleges and universities). As such, most students will need to seek financial assistance to meet these expenses. It is important, however, not to rule out any college on the basis of cost alone. Often schools that have higher tuition costs are more able to provide aid than schools that have a lower cost.

Determining who will receive aid is not simple. Family income alone will not predict eligibility. A number of other factors are considered such as family size, indebtedness, or educational expenses for other family members. "Need" is the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college and what a student's family can afford to pay. Many colleges no longer guarantee that they will meet the demonstrated need. Since college costs differ, a student will be eligible for different amounts of financial aid from different colleges. An important thing to know about financial aid for college is that the guidelines change nearly every year. Be sure to get updated information.

**Deadlines are very important.
Find out what they are and stick to them.
It is expected that you will have to estimate financial information.**



Types of Financial Aid

- **Grants** or scholarships do not have to be repaid. Grants usually are awarded on the basis of need. Scholarships may be awarded on the basis of need or some other criteria such as academic achievement.
- **Loans** must be repaid. Sometimes repayment is deferred until after a student graduates or leaves school.
- **Work Study** involves earning money through a job usually arranged by the college.

How to Apply for Financial Aid

The application form for admission to a college contains the necessary information regarding applying for financial aid. Some colleges have their own financial aid form, which must be completed. They may also require a copy of the parent's income tax form.

Most colleges and all federal and state aid programs use a standardized form called the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** as a basis for granting aid. Many schools also require the **CSS Profile** along with the FAFSA. The Profile is a detailed account of a family's financial situation. When the Profile is completed, it is sent to the College Scholarship Service. The Service processes the Profile and sends the results to the colleges that a student indicates.

A registration form for the CSS Profile will be available in the early fall.

The FAFSA cannot be submitted until January 1st but should be done as soon as possible after that date. The FAFSA form is available at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. The Profile can be filed as soon as a family can prepare it.

Be aware of college deadlines for filing the Profile and FAFSA. Most colleges require the financial aid documents be completed by March 31st. It is better to estimate financial information than to miss the deadlines.

Grants and Scholarships

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

Most colleges award scholarships for academic, athletic, community service or some special talent or achievement. Sometimes a student is automatically considered for the scholarship but sometimes the applicant must apply by a certain date that may be sooner than the application deadline.

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

The NMS Corporation administers many scholarships for colleges and businesses. Scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis, which is based initially on the results of the PSAT/NMSQT exam, which is taken in October of Junior Year. The process is as follows:

- A student becomes a Semi-Finalist by obtaining a high score on the PSAT/NMSQT exam.
- Those students scoring just below Semi-Finalist status are named Commended Students.
- A student may become a Finalist when the high school records and SAT scores are evaluated.
- Only Finalists are eligible to receive scholarships administered by NMSQT.

CORPORATE/BUSINESS/NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Sometimes businesses sponsor scholarships for employees' children or hold national competitions. Some information may be available in the Guidance Office, but families should also check with the Personnel Office at their places of employment.

PRIVATE CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS SCHOLARSHIPS

Some private groups or organization sponsor scholarships and send notice of those to high schools (generally not until January). These scholarships often change from year to year. Families are advised to check with any organization to which they belong.

MELROSE PERMANENT SCHOLARSHIP

Local groups and agencies make scholarships available to citizens of their city or town. However, families are advised to check with the guidance office at their local public high school for information about local scholarships. Many are available to any resident of the community. The information is usually available after January.



Grants and Scholarships (Continued)

BASIC EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM (PELL GRANT)

This program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. There is a section on the FAFSA mentioned above that is checked if a student wishes to apply for this program.

LOANS

The federal government determines (by information provided in the FAFSA) a student's eligibility for a federal loan. These loans have limits depending on the student's year in school and may be subsidized or unsubsidized.

- Subsidized loan: interest does not accrue while the student is in the school full time.
- Unsubsidized loan: interest accrues while the student is in school.

Neither of these loans begins repayment until six months after graduation or if the student leaves school. Some banks offer loan programs and often the payments begin immediately. Other state and government agencies offer loans at different rates and repayment plans. You can work with the college financial aid office to find the best loans for your situation.

WORK STUDY

The college provides a job on campus for which the student receives money to put toward educational expenses.

Other Sources of Information:

Publications

Further information on financial aid and scholarships can be found in publications such as: The College Blue Book, The Scholarship Book, and College Financial Aid Annual

Or online at: Finaid.org, Fastweb.com, or Collegeboard.com

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION NIGHTS:

Each year all senior students and their parents are invited to Financial Aid Information Night sponsored by the Melrose High School Guidance Department. Generally one is held in the fall. A representative from MEFA will give a detailed explanation of the FAFSA and the Profile and the way in which colleges use that date to compute a student's "need Factor", the types of financial aid packages (loans, grants, work-study) typically given, etc. The Guidance Department strongly advises parents and students to take advantage of these informative programs.

College Search Do's and Don'ts for Parents

The college search process is an exciting yet stressful time for many families. As a young person embarks on the initiation into adulthood, there are many ways that parents can be positive role models and provide a framework for students to be successful. The process can be compared to a big soccer game, where the parents and the students each have their roles. The parent makes sure the student gets a good night's sleep, has a healthy breakfast, a clean uniform, directions to the field, and gets the student to the field on time. The student is the one who actually steps onto the field and plays the game. The parent would never dream of "crossing the white line," running onto the field, and kicking the ball for the student. Whether the team wins or not, the parent cheers from the sidelines and provides support and encouragement. The college search process is very similar-the parent helps provide the framework but the student must own the process and the experience. Not only will this help build the young person's self respect and confidence, but it will send the desired messages to the admission offices. It is also a precious opportunity to teach the student life skills that will serve him/her forever.

Do:

- Offer to purchase organizational supplies to manage all the college mail
- Offer to purchase labels for your son/daughter to create address stickers for college fair inquiry cards
- Help manage the college search calendar and the many deadlines
- Discuss an appropriate e-mail address for your son to use for emailing admission offices
- Have your son/daughter contact colleges to set up visits, interviews, RSVP to events
- Take your son/daughter to visit college campuses
- Ask for their impression of a campus visit before offering your own
- Discuss appropriate order of interviews –don't interview at #1 school first
- Work with your child to select an interview outfit, practice interview handshake
- Share how you want to be introduced to an interviewer
- Discuss an appropriate senior year course schedule, consider demands of college process
- Discuss whether it is appropriate to apply "early" or "regular decision"
- Attend financial aid night, fill out financial aid forms on time
- Resist placing too much emphasis on college rankings
- Reflect on the best college "fit" for your son/daughter considering his/her strengths, weaknesses, values, interests, and goals. Colleges are also looking to make the best match according to "fit"
- Remember: students will be most successful in an environment that is a great match, not necessarily a name brand college



College Search Do's and Don'ts for Parents

Don't:

Be careful of language – refrain from using the following phrases:

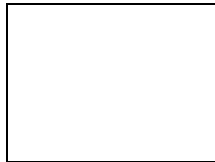
- “Our” application
- “We” are taking the SAT’s
- “We” have an interview
- “We” are applying to college

Be mindful of behavior:

- Fight the urge to ask lots of questions during tours, interviews, college fairs and information sessions.
- Instead, hang back and let the student take the lead.
- Resist contacting admission offices to inquire about his application status. The students need to do this (and colleges want to hear from them).
- It’s OK to proof essays and applications for grammar, spelling, etc., but the writing should be the student’s. Admission officers can tell the difference.
- Do not share your son/daughter’s SAT scores with others, including neighbors, relatives, coworkers, and other parents. It is private and personal information, like your salary or weight.
- It’s OK to purchase stamps and envelopes for your child, but do not fax application material from your office.

Student initiative is critical – the student needs to take ownership of the process and not be a bystander. This sends the desired message to admissions offices: that the student is interested in the institution, is engaged in the process, and is showing signs of being ready for independent college life. It also gives the student a chance to stand on the edge of the nest and try out his/her wings while you provide loving support from the sideline. When the student takes ownership of the process and knows that he/she got into college on his/her own, it builds self-respect and confidence, what wonderful gifts to give a young person.

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