

Applying to College

The process of applying for college admission varies from one school to another. They are not the same schools, and have different requirements, nuances, etc. This paper will cover the majority of possibilities, maybe not everything that you may be asked for. All colleges have their own deadlines as well. It is up to you to know the specifics about the admissions process and deadlines at the school(s) that you apply to. Remember to be early on deadlines, not just “on-time”.

Strategy

Apply to schools or varying selectivity. Apply to schools that you would like to attend from each level; your “Dream School” (may or may not get accepted), a “Good Bet School” a good school and good fit for you, that will most likely accept you, and a “Sure Bet School” that you know you will get accepted to. It is also recommended to apply to at least one in-state school.

Be sure to apply as early as possible. October 1st is your target date for completion and submission of all of your college applications. Financial Aid and Housing decisions vary by school but early applying typically gains you first consideration for these two items. More selective schools may not process as many applications per day in the Fall as they do in the Spring; so early applying may help you.

College Application Parts

Official High School Transcript: This is traditionally sent directly from the Registrar to the college or university. As soon as you have completed an application, notify the Registrar so that a transcript can be mailed out.

Standardized Test Results: These scores are recorded on your official transcript; however, many colleges require they be sent directly from the testing agency (ACT/SAT/CLT). There may be a fee involved with this process.

Application Form: You as the prospective student are required to complete and submit the application by the college deadline. They generally ask for the following information:

- Personal and Educational data (name, address, email, phone number, high schools attended, college credit earned, parental information, standardized test scores).
- Any Honors or Awards received.
- Extracurricular activities, volunteer activities.
- Previous Employment history (internships, part time jobs, summer activities, etc)
- Essay (short answer or longer personal essay-school dependent)
- Disciplinary information

Secondary School Report (SSR) or Counselor Recommendation form: This is not required by all colleges. If it is at a school that you are applying, notify the Registrar at least two weeks prior to the due date.

Mid-Year Report form: Like the SSR/CRF, not all colleges require this. If it is required, notify the Registrar at least two weeks prior to the due date. The purpose of this form is for the college to see your first semester grades from your Senior year.

College Recommendation forms: These are not required by all colleges. If they are, request them a minimum of two weeks prior to the due date.

Types of College Admissions

Rolling Admission: Applications are processed as received and students notified of their admission status typically within 2-3 weeks.

Regular Decision: (Traditional Admission): Applications are required by a set deadline; decisions are mailed to applicants by a set date, usually in April. Students must respond back by May 1st.

Early Decision: You may only have one of these pending. If it is accepted, the student must attend this school. This is a binding contract, so careful consideration needs to be given prior to seeking early decision and submitting the application.

Early Action: Students may apply to several schools and receive an admission decision well in advance (usually in December) of the normal Spring notification. Unlike Early Decision, this is not a binding contract. Students do not have to accept this offer.

Tips/Recommendations

Prepare a resume. You will be asked to develop an academic resume as part of your "Accomplishment" sheet. This document will be invaluable to you and others as you fill out college and scholarship applications.

Accomplishment Sheet

Students and parents are requested to prepare an Accomplishment sheet at the start of their Senior year and update it as necessary. This sheet describes all of your academic, athletic information as well as community service, organizations you belong to and any awards you may have received. Be sure to keep an updated copy on file in the Registrar's office at all times. They will be made available to school personnel for writing student recommendations.

Recommendation letters are most often the last component of the admissions packet read. These are considered to be a critical part of the application process by those

colleges that request them. This Accomplishment sheet will allow school personnel to make the letter appear more personal and unique, as well as address highlights that you would like mentioned. Any student desiring a faculty letter of recommendation must have an Accomplishment sheet on file in the Registrar's office.

Essay

Many colleges have an essay requirement as part of the admissions process. Some colleges make it optional; however, there is no optional in reality. They are expecting to see an essay from each student. This is a critical component of the admissions process that is designed to set you apart from others. This is your opportunity to showcase your writing skills and show how you can contribute to their college community.

As such, admissions personnel are not looking for a specific "correct answer" on an essay, they are looking to find out about you as an individual. This essay is not the chance to recap information that has been provided elsewhere in the application process. This is your opportunity to tell the admissions personnel what they do not know about you.

The best written essays are original; they tell your story. This is your opportunity to "sell" yourself to the admissions personnel. As with all writing, start off with hook to catch and maintain the reader's attention. Admissions personnel are busy and may or may not read the entire essay; that makes your hook very important. Hook them and finish the essay strong, provide them with an Ah-ha moment.

Common essay topics include sports, pets, global issues, shared tragedies, church mission trips and other common events. If you choose to use one of these as an essay topic, your essay needs to be above the rest. The level of competition is much higher when using one of these topics.

Begin working on your essay as early in the process as possible. Make sure to have it proofread by more than one person. It is important that you stick to the length requirements of the college. If they do not provide guidance on word count or number of pages, submit 2 pages. If they provide you a writing prompt, be sure that you answer the question that is being asked in a complete manner.

Recommendations for Success

Know and understand the admissions process of the school(s) to which you are applying. Particularly, in regard to letters of recommendation required. Some colleges require a recommendation from your school counselor, some from teachers, a family friend, employer (manager), and some from a member of the Clergy. Some colleges provide a specific form to fill out, while others want a letter.

Think through who you ask for a letter of recommendation from; it is critical that they know you well and can express that. They will be asked to address your personality, strengths/weaknesses, aptitude, hobbies, etc. Teachers that you select should be from your Junior or Senior year, and preferably had you for more than one class.

Provide them with at least 2 weeks' notice to prepare the letter for you. It is your responsibility to ensure that those writing letters on your behalf have the college supplied forms or the letter format required. You need to provide the person with a pre-addressed and stamped envelope for them to mail the recommendation in. Be sure that you notify the Registrar to provide your Accomplishment sheet to those persons writing on your behalf. Show your gratitude to those that write a recommendation letter on your behalf by writing a heartfelt thank you note to them.