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This handbook has been prepared for Mundelein High School students and their parents to provide the basic information you will need to conduct your college search: the process of college selection, application and admission. Alternatives to college are also included.

The search is understandably confusing. Your college experience will be much more than preparing for a career. At the same time, it can play a major role in your career even if you do not follow a specific occupational program. Most high school students are uncertain about what career to pursue. Going through a thoughtful college search and learning to make decisions based upon sound information is an important experience in itself. A calendar is provided to help you organize what to do when.

Study this handbook carefully and follow the procedures outlined. Use your guidance counselor and the college counselor to help initiate your search and discuss your progress. We want to help you explore and plan constructively for your future.

**CCRC (Room B103) Hours of Operation:**

**Monday - Friday – 7:15 AM – 3:45 PM**

**College Counselor: Mrs. Andrea Rusk  
Receptionist: Ms. Isela Ocampo**

**CEEB/ACT High School Code: 143-097**

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

What do you want to study? Where do you want to go to school?

If you have not heard these questions lately, be assured that you will hear them soon and very often. In order to choose a college or field of study you have to honestly evaluate your strengths, challenges, desires, goals and dreams relative to the colleges and universities you want to explore. One of the best ways to begin is to reflect upon your experience as a student at Mundelein High School.

The following questions published by the College Board in “Looking Ahead to Your Future” are modified to help you in your self-assessment process.

### **Goals and Values**

- What aspects of your MHS experience have you enjoyed the most (academic and social)? What has been the most disappointing experience for you? What would you change or do differently?
- What values are important to you?
- How do you define success? Are you satisfied with your accomplishments to date? What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
- Which of your personal strengths would you most like to develop?
- What experiences have shaped your growth and your way of thinking?

### **Education**

- What are your academic interests? What courses have you enjoyed the most? What courses have been the most difficult for you?
- How do you learn best? What methods of teaching and style of teaching engage your interest and effort the most?
- Are learning and academic success respected here at MHS? What would you preserve or change about MHS if you had an opportunity to do so?
- How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss issues, and exchange ideas? What has been your most stimulating intellectual experience in recent years?
- In what area or skill do you feel confident?
- Have you worked to your potential? Are your standardized test scores and your academic record an accurate measure of your ability and potential? What do you consider the best measures of your potential for college work?
- Are there outside circumstances that have impacted your academic performance?

### **Activities and Interests**

- What activities do you enjoy the most? What activities have meant the most to you?
- Do your activities show any pattern of commitment, competence, contribution or leadership?
- How would you describe your role at MHS or in the greater community? What would you consider your most significant contribution?

### **Personality and Relationships**

- How would someone who knows you well describe your best qualities? Your shortcomings? Would you agree with their assessment?
- Do you feel that you have grown and matured during your high school years?
- Which relationships are most important to you and why?
- How are you influenced by others who are important to you? How do you respond to pressure, competition and challenge? How do you react to failure, disappointment or criticism?
- How do you go about making choices or decisions for yourself? What are the best decisions you have made recently? How much do you rely on direction or advice from others? Have you ever chosen anything just because it was new or interesting?

### **College Preferences**

- What satisfactions and challenges do you expect to encounter in college? To what are you looking forward? What worries you most? What are the overriding considerations in your college search?
- Why do you want a post-secondary education? Why are you going to college?
- How do you hope to grow and change throughout college?
- Which interests do you want to pursue in college? Do your interests require any special facilities, programs or opportunities?
- Are you most interested in career preparation, technical training or general knowledge and skills of inquiry?
- How well do you respond to pressure and academic competition from others?
- How much structure do you need? How self-disciplined are you?
- How would you enjoy living in a different part of the country? What kinds of surroundings are essential to your well-being? Are you comfortable around people who grew up differently than you?
- How free do you feel to make your college decisions? Do you and your parents agree on your plans for college? How important to you are the opinions of your parents and friends?
- How important is prestige?

### **Athletic Considerations**

- Do you intend to participate in college athletics and at which level (Division I, II, III, NAIA, etc)? What impact will your ability to play have on your desire to attend a particular institution?
- Do you expect to be a recruited athlete? Is a scholarship offer critical to your consideration of a particular college?
- Are you prepared to compete at an intercollegiate level? How do you know?

## **THE FIVE P'S** **(Person, People, Place, Program and Price)**

An easy and systematic way to start your college search is to understand The 5 P's. Remember, the earlier you start your search, the more prepared you will be in your senior year.

### **THE PERSON**

Who is this applicant? What classes have you taken in high school? What activities are you involved in? Having a good sense of self is a great place to start the college selection process!

- How would I observe you learning while in a classroom?
- Do you make yourself known to your teachers?
- What type of college will best fit **YOUR** personality?
- What are **YOUR** goals and expectations for yourself in college?

### **THE PEOPLE**

With whom are you going to learn? You will spend a great deal of time with these people; they will help you network for success; they will mentor you and challenge your vision of the world.

*People Concerns:*

- Cultural and religious diversity
- Religious affiliations and diversity
- Geographic diversity
- Social structures and traditions
- Student/faculty rapport
- Connections and networking

Based on this developing picture of the people/community at the school you want to attend, you need to look for a school community where you will fit in and will be comfortable. A campus visit is an important part of researching this piece.

### **THE PLACE**

There are 168 hours in a week. You will spend about 100 hours in class, studying, or sleeping. What are you going to do with the other 68 hours?

*Place Concerns:*

- Distance/travel options/costs
- Size of campus
- Climate
- Geography
- Physical environment

## **THE PROGRAM (Career/Major)**

The old question was, “What are you going to be?” because people generally worked at one job until retirement. The new question is, “What do you want to be for the first five years after college? The second five years?” The US Department of Labor says that today’s high school students will have five to eight major job changes in their lives. Your choice of major should prepare you for your immediate career path as well as prepare you with a broad set of transferable skills that will widen your world vision and help you prepare for an uncertain future. Beware of rankings! Your job is to find the school that is best for YOU; YOU should rank the schools – don’t let others choose for you!

### *Program Concerns:*

- Calendar system (semester, trimester, quarter)
- Type of school (public, private, rural, urban)
- Degree programs
- Clubs/Extra-curricular opportunities
- Major/Minor
- Study abroad opportunities
- Internship opportunities
- Research opportunities
- Support programs offered

**Undecided?** That’s OK! However, even if you are undecided, you should still investigate options that interest you now. You can continue to re-evaluate them as you learn more.

## **THE PRICE**

The cost of a college experience can have a significant effect on which school you choose to attend. Generally, the price of a college education is the second most expensive purchase in your life!

Be aware that the “sticker price” of the college or university is rarely what you will actually pay. Scholarships, which may be numerically based on factors like the student’s SAT score and GPA (merit aid) or financial aid that could be need based can bring the cost down significantly, and an institution with a high sticker price may end up being more affordable than one that begins with a lower price. This may happen with schools that have large endowments and more ability to provide additional support and funding for incoming students. For this reason, price should not be an immediate exclusionary factor. Researching all aspects of the financial aid at the school will give a far better understanding of what is likely to be the final cost of attendance. Additionally, remember that this cost is going to continue for 4 or more years, so be sure to ask if the scholarships or the aid provided is renewable (provided for each year that the student is in attendance) or if it is only a one time offering.

The cost of college is often the ultimate determining factor for a student and their family, so knowing where the price begins and what “discounts” may be offered is a significant factor in final selection.

### *Price concerns:*

- State vs. private institutions
- Sticker price vs. actual cost of attendance
- Merit awards and scholarships available
- Athletic awards/scholarships
- Residency
- Financial Aid available
- Average student/parent debt upon graduation
- Average number of years to graduate

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE / COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY

Community colleges are the “open door” to higher education for all of us. The mission of the community college is far different from the traditional four-year college. Community colleges exist to afford every high school graduate the opportunity to further his/her education, whether that individual be an 18- year-old grad, a 42-year-old mother returning to the work force, or a veteran re-tooling skills to advance in a career.

Students may enter the community college as “undecided” for one semester, take general courses, and then decide whether they want to enter either a vocational or transfer program. Other students know exactly the path they want to take and meet with their advisor to ensure that their credits will transfer on to the 4-year institution of their choice upon completion. Still others work with CLC to follow pathways that are guaranteed to directly admit them into rigorous and challenging degree paths at a wide variety of institutions.

Community colleges offer students different types of degrees. The Certificate Program is a one-year career program designed to prepare students for immediate entry into a specific job. The Associate of Arts and Associate in Science are two-year degrees designed for students who will transfer to a four-year college or university to complete a bachelor degree. The Associate of Applied Science degree is awarded upon completion of a two-year career program designed to prepare the student for immediate entry into a specific career field.

### *Some Advantages to Attending a Community College:*

- ✓ You receive a good education at a fraction of the cost.
- ✓ The college transfer program allows you to get some of your core requirements out of the way in a less expensive way. It may dramatically decrease the need for student loans.
- ✓ You can establish a college record which will allow you to transfer into a four-year college. You are offered a variety of programs designed to prepare you for immediate job market entry.
- ✓ Classes are small and are taught by faculty who are committed to teaching and preparing you for your next step: going to a four-year college or beginning your career. If your goal is to transfer credits to an out-of-state four-year college, check with an advisor at the community college. S/he will help you design a course schedule geared to the admission requirements of that particular college.

**If you are interested in attending CLC, talk with our CLC Rep. We work very closely with CLC to help high school students apply, register, and transition to CLC.**

## OPTIONS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

What path after high school will best meet your needs and help you reach your goals? Besides a four-year college, the following are other options some students may want to consider:

**Career and Technical Schools:** These types of schools are usually privately owned and the programs they offer vary greatly from several months to two years or more. There is an emphasis on career-related education, technical skills and hands-on training. Some fields in which you can receive training at a vocational school are: medical assistant, automotive technology, air conditioning and refrigeration, travel and tourism, electronics engineering technology, dental assistant and business data processing. Because these schools advertise extensively in the media, some schools have achieved a high level of name recognition. Programs vary a great deal in quality; thus parents and students should practice good consumer skills when investigating and contracting for vocational education. When considering a business, technical, or trade school, check carefully into its accreditation, employer recognition, and costs. To help judge the quality of a school, check with the Illinois State Board of Education-Vocational Schools Certification Division, a professional accrediting agency, and with the Better Business Bureau. Also, ask for names of employers of former students, check with these employers to see how they regard the school.

**Art & Design Schools:** Programs offered at fine arts schools vary considerably. Some require exceptional talent and skills and may lead to direct job placement. The programs at art and design schools may include writing, film, dance, music, musical theater, theater, and the visual arts. Majoring in one of the arts will teach students how to pursue with discipline and dedication, an interest or activity s/he enjoys. Again, be sure to thoroughly research the school to be sure you will be getting the experience you expect.

**Military:** Enlistment in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard is at least a two-year commitment. On-the-job training is available in a wide variety of careers, including computer programmers, aircraft mechanics, medical service technicians, etc. In addition, the leadership and management training you receive prepares you for your future career. Financially, the military helps pay for your education in several ways and, in return, you fulfill your obligation. Representatives of the branches visit each high school on a monthly basis during lunch periods. Check the schedule in the CCRC for these dates, as well as to obtain brochures on the opportunities available in the different branches of service.

**Apprenticeships:** On-the-job training is provided and you are hired as a trainee to learn a craft or trade from an experienced craftsman. It is for students whose personal preferences lie in working with both their heads and their hands. You will receive real-world training and experience, as well as entry into difficult-to-break-into trades, such as plumbing or electrical work. In an apprenticeship program, you literally earn while you learn. Sometimes previous training from a trade school or the military may be helpful in becoming a good candidate for an apprenticeship.

**Employment:** Employment is an appropriate option for some high school graduates. Students who choose employment as their post high school option should have a three to five year plan. This will help ensure that they do not get trapped in a dead-end job. Students should realize that they can go back to school anytime, even if it is only to take a course or two.



## **PLANNING TIMELINE**

### **Junior Year**

#### **September—February**

- Talk with friends, parents and faculty about colleges and careers.
- Organize a file of personal and institutional information on college & career opportunities.
- Review and analyze PSAT scores if taken.
- Visit with college representatives in the CCRC.
- Attend the IL Regional College Fair (150+ colleges available).
- Meet your guidance counselor for your first semester appointment.
- Register for senior courses. Take the most demanding program possible and achieve successfully.
- Attend College Planning evening events at MHS

#### **March**

- Earnestly begin your college search.
- Complete the self-assessment process.
- Attend the College Planning night at MHS.
- Attend the IL Regional College Fair (150+ colleges available).
- Visit colleges over spring break.
- Register for AP exams if applicable.

#### **April**

- Take the SAT
- Attend Financial Planning for College at MHS
- Research colleges, plan visits.
- Schedule the ACT/SAT if applicable.

#### **May**

- Take AP exams if applicable.
- Start to narrow choices through research, visits, and talks with your counselor and parents.
- Begin documenting deadlines for the fall, discuss Early Decision/ Early Action as possibilities.

#### **June—August**

- Take the ACT/SAT again if necessary.
- Contact the colleges for information.
- Determine your organization method for completing applications in the fall.
- Begin working on college essay ideas.
- Revise and begin to finalize your college list.
- Schedule an appointment and meet with Mrs. Rusk

# PLANNING TIMELINE

## Senior Year

### September

- Meet with your counselor.
- Continue your college search.
- Attend College Planning evening events at MHS
- Attend college representative visits in the CCRC.
- Continue working on applications.
- Log on to Naviance, update colleges, letters of recommendation, and transcript requests as needed.
- Investigate scholarships that may be available at your colleges.
- Register for the SAT /ACT tests if you need to take or retake them.
- Submit CSS Profile registration form for schools requiring the profile.
- Politely ask teachers to write recommendations if required (and connect them in Naviance)

### October

- Take/re-take the ACT or SAT test, if needed.
- Follow-up on teacher/counselor recommendations to be sure they have been completed.
- Start submitting applications.
- BE AWARE OF DEADLINES. Early Decision/Early Action are often November 1.
- Request transcripts through Naviance.
- Send ACT scores when necessary (actstudent.org)
- Beginning October 1, Complete the FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid), which is required for those applying for financial aid and/or scholarships.
- Attend FAFSA workshop at MHS
- Search for scholarship opportunities/ complete applications.

### November

- BE AWARE OF DEADLINES and submit applications on time.
- Continue the application process.
- Search for scholarship opportunities.

### December

- Some college acceptance letters may arrive. Inform your counselor when you hear from a college.
- Watch for the Student Aid Report (SAR) to arrive, stating the estimated family contribution (EFC).
- Search for scholarship opportunities/ complete applications.

### January – February

- Continue to monitor deadlines and complete applications.
- Watch for the Student Aid Report (SAR) to arrive, stating the estimated family contribution (EFC).
- Follow through on scholarship opportunities/ complete applications.

### March

- Register for AP Exams if appropriate.
- Follow through on scholarship opportunities/ complete applications.

### April

- Decide which college you wish to attend and send a deposit to one school.
- Notify the colleges to which you were admitted but do not plan to attend.
- Follow through on scholarship opportunities/ complete applications.

### May

- Notify the college or university which you plan to attend by **May 1**.
- Take AP exams if appropriate.
- Request your final transcript.
- Congratulations! Graduation is finally here!

## GETTING STARTED

At first, trying to decide which college is going to fit your needs seems overwhelming. Anyone who picks up one of the college guides for the first time without a clue as to which college to attend usually encounters a great deal of anxiety. However, there is a strategy to reduce the stress. If you start early and don't leave things to the last minute, it can be fun...really!

**Evaluate yourself:** What are your strengths and weaknesses? Look at your transcript; do your grades represent your best effort? What were your favorite courses? What are your interests? Any ideas about what career you might pursue? Use the CCRC and surveys in Naviance to help you focus on your likes and dislikes and to explore career options.

**Take the SAT and/or ACT:** Use your scores, along with your grades, to help you determine the level of college competitiveness that would be most comfortable for you. Be careful that you don't place too much importance on the test scores. While they are important, what classes you take and how well you do in them, as well as your extracurricular involvement and community service, are considered greater indicators of your potential for success in college.

**Talk to college reps:** Important! They are a good source of information about their schools, both the strengths and weaknesses. They provide great insight to the college and can become your advocate if you decide to apply. Some of them are the ones who will be reviewing your application. The best part: they come to you! College representatives are available in the CCRC during the day at MHS. Check Naviance to see who is coming and register to meet with them.

**Talk to parents, other students, counselors, teachers and the college counselor:** It helps you sort through the information, so you can decide what is important to you in college selection.

**Use Naviance** to help develop a list of schools that will fit your needs. You begin by identifying criteria that are important to you such as location, size of school, setting, interesting major(s), athletic, or music programs, etc. You can repeat this as often as you wish; it is the very process that helps you begin to make decisions.

Remember to do careful research. The issue is not just getting into a "good" college, but receiving a diploma. What is most important is that you find a school which is a good match for you. There is more than one college at which you can be happy and meet your educational goals.

**Research your college list:** Find out more about your colleges. Be sure to check entrance requirements carefully. Talk with people again. Visit with representatives from schools, and ask lots of questions.

**Plan a campus visit:** There is no better indicator of how much you will like the school until you visit it. Schedule your visit in advance, and request specific additions if you have a particular interest (eg. you know you want to apply to the direct admit nursing program- request to speak to someone in the School of Nursing, or you plan to utilize campus resources for students with disabilities – request to stop in this office).

**Apply to colleges in the fall of senior year:** If you have done thorough research, you should be able to narrow down your choices down to 5-8 colleges to which you will apply. It is a good idea to apply to schools in the three categories: foundation schools (schools to which you are certain you will be admitted that may provide great financial packages), target (you would like to attend, is financially reasonable, and you are pretty sure of admittance), and reaches (wishful hope for admittance, less chance of financial affordability).

**Seek a college that is an academic fit:** You want to be challenged academically but not overwhelmed or in over your head.

## CHOOSING THE “RIGHT” COLLEGE

The process of choosing the “right” college is often very difficult. What is it that I’m looking for in a school? How many students are on campus? Do I want to stay close to home? Can we afford the tuition? And so on... Making a college choice is an important decision that may be a challenge. Until you find a place to begin, or a method to organize your thoughts and ideas into smaller, more manageable pieces, it may seem almost impossible to make any decision, let alone a good one. Many students going through this process are under the impression there is only one school which will fit their needs. In reality, there are more than 4,000 accredited institutions of higher learning in the U.S. --- and a good many of those would be equally suitable for you. The final selection of a college rightfully belongs to the student, but parents and the counseling staff can provide much insight. Here are a few suggestions you should remember. Always keep in mind, “A good school is a school that meets your needs.”

- Discuss your plans with your counselor. It is often beneficial to have your parents participate in this meeting. College selection is a team process.
- Attend college rep visits in the CCRC. Sign up through Naviance.
- Meet with the college counselor.
- Attend the IL Regional College Fairs to view a variety of options.
- Visit colleges of high interest. Call in advance, stay overnight, meet students, attend classes, and arrange to meet with admissions staff and/or faculty from a specific area of study in which you are interested.
- Pay attention to financial affordability - is the “sticker price” what you will pay? Are you eligible for merit scholarships or financial aid?
- Think about how you best learn and feel most comfortable:
  - Large or small classes
  - Competitive or more relaxed atmosphere/environment
  - Diversity of student body

Attempt to seek a ‘match’ – a school at which you feel both challenged and comfortable.

## ADMISSION COMPETITION CATEGORIES

Colleges may consider several or all of the following factors in determining admission eligibility: pattern of high school coursework, grades in academic courses, test scores, college major, cumulative GPA, talents, leadership roles, community activities, evidence of exceptional motivation, letters of recommendation, athletic ability, and related career exploration.

<b>Admission Competition Categories</b>	<b>Educational Opportunities In the United States</b>	<b>ACT/SAT Scores (mid-50)</b>	<b>Recommended H.S. Academic Subjects</b>
1. <b>MOST COMPETITIVE</b>  May only admit 20% of applicants	Fewer than 50 colleges  Example: Ivy League, Stanford, Duke, Rice and others of this caliber	29-35  1350-1600	4 yrs. English 4 yrs. Adv. Mathematics 3-4 yrs. Lab Science 4 yrs. Foreign Language 3 yrs. Social Science Honors and AP course work recommended
2. <b>HIGHLY COMPETITIVE</b>  May only admit 20% to 30% of applicants	Fewer than 75 colleges  University of Notre Dame Big Ten (especially engineering) Military academics	27-29  1280-1380	4 yrs. English 4 yrs. Adv. Mathematics 3 yrs. Laboratory Science 2-4 yrs. Foreign Language 3 yrs. Social Science
3. <b>VERY COMPETITIVE</b>  May only admit 33% of applicants.	Fewer than 150 colleges  Most major state universities Strong liberal arts colleges	25-27  1200-1300	See Category 2 with possibly one less year in Mathematics 2 yrs. Foreign Language
4. <b>SOMEWHAT COMPETITIVE</b>  May only admit 40% to 60% of applicants	More than 1,000 colleges  Most Illinois state universities and medium Midwest universities, some private liberal arts schools	20-25  1020-1230	4 yrs. English 3+ yrs. Adv. Mathematics 2+ yrs. Lab Science 2+ yrs. Social Science The curriculum above is marginal for many colleges.
5. <b>COMPETITIVE</b>  Admits most applicants	More than 700 colleges  Smaller out-of-state universities, private schools	Under 20  Under 1050	See Category 4
6. <b>OPEN ADMISSION</b>	More than 1,000 colleges  Including community colleges	Used for placement	General College Preparatory Curriculum Vocational students Diploma/specialty requirements
7. <b>SPECIALIZED</b>  Admission criteria varies	Specialized Colleges or Schools: Art, Music, Theater Arts, Trade, and Technical Schools	Portfolio, audition may be weighted more than test scores	High School diploma and courses in area of career interest

## **VISITING WITH POST-SECONDARY REPRESENTATIVES**

Each year over **200 college representatives** will visit the high school to talk with prospective students. Most of them visit during the fall; a few return in the spring. The representative you see here may well be the person who will read your application!

A schedule of college representatives and when they will visit is available on Naviance

- Most representatives will stay for 30 minutes to an hour. If you are unable to attend, leave your name and e-mail address in the CCRC and we will give it to the representative.
- Courtesy is an absolute must. Feel free to ask questions – lots of them! – But be aware that other students have questions also.
- Taking notes during a session makes good sense. (See Page 17)
- Socializing with a friend, not listening, chewing gum, or other distracting behaviors are clearly inappropriate
- Although a vast majority of this information is available on the college's website or homepage, and prior research is always helpful, following is a list of possible questions to guide you as you listen to the presentations.

### **Admission**

- What are the admission requirements?
- Does the school admit students on GPA? Test scores? Academic units required?
- How important are recommendations and personal statements? Is there a counselor print-out page with the application?

### **Academics**

- Does the school offer majors of interest to you?
- What opportunities are there for research or study abroad?
- Are there internships or co-ops?

### **Application**

- When should I file for admission?
- What percentage of applicants are admitted?

### **Testing**

- Does the school accept both the ACT and the SAT as college admissions exams?
- What is the average range of test scores for entering college freshmen?
- Do I need to take SAT Subject Tests?

### **Financial Aid/Cost**

- What is the estimated annual total cost? (Housing, Food, Books and Tuition)
- Does the school offer merit scholarships?
- If out of state: are there tuition breaks available? Reciprocity agreements?
- What are the sources of financial aid and scholarships?

### **Housing**

- How difficult is it to get on-campus housing?
- How and when do I apply?
- What percent of students live on campus?
- Are there separate residences for freshmen?

## THE CAMPUS VISIT

There is no better way to learn about a college, its faculty, facilities, academic and social climate, and physical environment than to **VISIT THE SCHOOL**. It is your best resource, and just being on a college campus for a few hours will tell you much about both you and the college. While it's true that the best time to visit a college is when classes are in full session, many families use their summer vacations to explore college choices. You can meet with some students and tour the campus, but keep in mind; there just will not be as much activity during the summer. If possible, you should try to re-visit your top choices in the fall of senior year or after you have been admitted. Regardless of when you visit, general guidelines always apply.

1. Call the admission office at least two weeks in advance. When calling, be sure to request a tour, interview (if possible), class visit, directions to campus and the admission office, and local lodging information. This is also the time for special requests: meeting with a coach, faculty member, financial aid officer; sitting in on a class; or staying overnight in a residence hall. If you have a special need, don't be afraid to ask.
2. Become familiar with the college before you visit. Research it online and in the CCRC file cabinets.
3. Make a list of questions to ask during your visit. Try not to ask questions simple research could have answered (hint # 2 above). See page 16 for sample questions.
4. Be prepared to share information about yourself such as GPA, current classes, and extracurricular involvement. Request an unofficial copy of your transcript from the Registrar/Counselor and take it with you on your visits.
5. Put some thought into where your parents stay during your visit. While you should stay in the residence hall if at all possible, they might consider a Bed & Breakfast rather than a large hotel. Generally, the folks who own B&Bs are locals who know a good deal about the school and community, and much information is shared between all the guests at the breakfast table. Very often these guests are other families who are either looking at the college or who have children attending the school.
6. Two visits per day, possibly three, should be the maximum if the schools are fairly close to each other. At the end of each visit jot down notes while the impressions are still clear in your mind.
7. Don't judge a college by one student, one faculty member, or one tour guide. Remember, a single person cannot represent the entire school.
8. After the visit, write a short thank you note to any staff member who gave his/her time to you.

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A COLLEGE VISIT**

- What areas of study are emphasized, and how do they fit your field of interest and ability?
- What is the amount and kind of study necessary for success?
- What percentage of first-year students return for the sophomore year?
- What percentage of students graduate in four years?
- Are there special academic programs? Study abroad opportunities?
- Is there an advising system? How is it organized and who are the advisors?
- What types of tutoring programs are available?
- What is the geographic, ethnic, religious, and racial makeup of the student body?
- What special interest groups are available?
- How is admission determined? What is the importance of ACT? SAT? GPA? Class Rank? Extracurricular?
- What are the hot issues on campus?
- Is guaranteed housing available? All four years?
- How are roommates assigned?
- What percentage of students go home on weekends?
- What percentage of seniors go on to graduate school programs?
- Is there a career planning and placement center for students?
- What is the job placement record for graduates in the field(s) you might study?
- Are merit scholarships available? What are the criteria for selection?
- Is this college “need blind” or “need conscious” in the selection process? In other words, does the ability to pay enter into the admission decision?



## COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

The criteria to be used when making college comparisons will vary according to student need. Add other criteria as appropriate before comparing colleges.

	College 1	College 2	College 3
<b>College Name</b>			
<b>Size</b> • Size of College • Average Class Size			
<b>Location</b> • Rural or Urban • Distance from home			
<b>Unique Academic Programs</b> • Research opportunities • Honors programs • Service learning			
<b>Transfer Credits</b> • How many? How? (contact college for transfer info)			
<b>Type</b> • Public or Private • Technical, Liberal Arts • Religious affiliation?			
<b>Activities/Athletics</b> • Are the ones most important to me available?			
<b>Housing</b> • Is there on-campus housing? • Do they offer co-ed, all-female, all-male housing? • What type of off-campus housing is available?			
<b>Cost</b> • Total tuition + fees • Room + board <b>OR</b> rent + food			
<b>Financial Aid Availability</b> • What type and amount of grants, scholarships, loans, and work study are they offering me? • What will I pay out-of-pocket? • How much will I need to take out in loans?			
<b>Flexibility</b> • Are classes offered at times that fit with my schedule? • Is there a fast-track option? • Can I complete a degree online?			
<b>Facilities</b> • Classrooms • Housing • Computer labs • Science Labs • Student Center/recreational area • Internet access			
<b>Services</b> • Is health insurance available? • What services are offered by the health center? • Is there a career services office to help me in my job search?			
<b>Overall Impression</b> • People, campus environment, community, safety, diversity • Would I feel safe and comfortable?			

## THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT ATHLETE

A student interested in participating in athletics at a Division I or II college or university is required to meet academic guidelines as established by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), an organization that governs and enforces rules on athletic eligibility, recruiting, and financial aid. For more information about the NCAA, check out the website at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

Another governing association is the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). There are more than 300 schools which have membership in the NAIA. These schools tend to have relatively small student enrollments. Most NAIA schools do offer some athletic scholarships. For more information about the NAIA, check out the website at [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org).

Within the NCAA there are Divisions I, II, and III. Colleges and universities are placed in a division according to size, scope of athletic programs, and availability of funds for scholarships. Division I and II schools offer athletic scholarships, and are mostly large and medium in size. No athletic scholarships are allowed at Division III schools.

The only aid that might be given would be through academic awards, merit, or need based financial aid. Many of the specific NCAA requirements for athletes do not apply to Division III schools, as no athletic scholarships are awarded. A student, who intends to participate in Division I or II athletics as a college freshman, must register and be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center. The process for becoming certified should start immediately following the end of your junior year by registering with the Eligibility Center. The application is available on the NCAA Eligibility Center website. Students need to submit a transcript request form to have an official transcript sent to the Eligibility Center.

### **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility**

Students entering a Division I college or university must have 16 core courses to be eligible to practice, play, and receive financial aid at a Division I school.

#### **Division I – 16 Core Courses**

- Satisfy high school graduation requirements;
- Qualify under the Grade-Point Average/Test Score Sliding Scale Index.

#### **Complete the following core courses:**

4 years of English.

3 years of mathematics (Algebra 1 or higher).

2 years of natural/physical science (one must be a lab science).

1 year of additional English, math or science.

2 years of social studies.

4 years of additional core courses (from any area listed above, or from International language).

## COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS AND DATES

Many colleges require you to report standardized test scores (SAT / ACT). Some of the more highly selective colleges also require SAT Subject Tests. It is your responsibility to know which tests each college requires. Each time you take a test, you could take advantage of the prepaid reports and send your scores to colleges in which you are interested. Make sure your scores are reported to Mundelein High School. Our code for both ACT and SAT is 143097.

### SAT and ACT

<b>Dates &amp; Deadlines</b>		
<b>ACT Test Date</b>	<b>ACT Registration Deadline</b>	<b>ACT Scores Available</b>
June 10, 2017	May 5, 2017	Jun. 20, 2017
September 9, 2017	Aug. 4, 2017	Sept. 19, 2017*
October 28, 2017	Sept. 22, 2017	Nov. 7, 2017*
December 9, 2017	Nov. 3, 2017	Dec. 19, 2017*
February 10, 2018	Jan. 12, 2018	Feb. 20, 2018*
April 14, 2018	Mar. 9, 2018	Apr. 24, 2018*
June 9, 2018	May 4, 2018	Jun. 19, 2018*
July 14, 2018	Jun. 15, 2018	Jul. 24, 2018*
<b>SAT Test Date</b>	<b>SAT Registration Deadline</b>	<b>SAT Scores Available</b>
June 3, 2017	May 9, 2017	Jul. 12, 2017
August 26, 2017	Jul. 28, 2017	Sept. 28, 2017*
October 7, 2017	Sept. 8, 2017	Nov. 9, 2017*
November 4, 2017	Oct. 5, 2017	Dec. 7, 2017*
December 2, 2017	Nov. 2, 2017	Jan. 10, 2018*
March 10, 2018	Feb. 9, 2018	Apr. 12, 2018*
May 5, 2018	Apr. 6, 2018	Jun. 7, 2018*
June 2, 2018	May 3, 2018	Jul. 11, 2018*
*estimated		

### Differences

<b>SAT</b>	<b>vs.</b>	<b>ACT</b>
content-based test	<b>Type of Test</b>	content-based test
Reading: 1, 65-min section; Math: 1, 25-min section (no calculator) & 1, 55-min section (w/ calculator); Writing & Language: 1, 35-min section; Essay: 1, 50-min section (optional)	<b>Test Format</b>	English: 1, 45-min section; Math: 1, 60-min section; Reading: 1, 35-min section; Science: 1, 35-min section; Writing: 1, 40-min essay (optional)
reading, relevant words in context, math, grammar & usage, analytical writing (optional)	<b>Content Covered</b>	grammar & usage, math, reading, science reasoning, and writing (optional)
questions are evidence and context-based in an effort to focus on real-world situations and multi-step problem-solving	<b>Test Style</b>	straightforward, questions may be long but are usually less difficult to decipher
Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing are each scored on a scale of 200-800. Composite SAT score is the sum of the two section scores and ranged from 400-1600.	<b>Scoring</b>	English, Math, Reading, and Science scores will each range between 1-36. Composite ACT score is the average of your scores on the four sections; ranges between 1-36
no – you do not lose points for incorrect answers	<b>Penalty for Wrong Answers?</b>	no – you do not lose points for incorrect answers
yes – you can choose which set(s) of SAT scores to submit to colleges	<b>Score Choice?</b>	yes – you can choose which set(s) of ACT scores to submit to colleges
questions increase in difficulty level as you move through that question type in a section (except reading passage questions, which progress chronologically through the passage)	<b>Difficulty Levels</b>	difficulty level of the questions is random
arithmetic, problem-solving & data analysis, heart of algebra, geometry, and trigonometry; formulas provided.	<b>Math Levels</b>	arithmetic, algebra I and II, functions, geometry, trigonometry; no formulas are provided

### **Additional information regarding standardized tests**

**PSAT-10 and PSAT-NMQST:** Ideally, all students take the PSAT-10 as a sophomore and the PSAT-NMQST in the fall of the junior year. Taking the test as a junior will qualify you for some scholarship consideration and identify you to colleges as a potential applicant. Reviewing results of these tests will help you to prepare for the SAT exam. The results of these tests are not reported to colleges. They are for your benefit only.

**SAT Subject Tests:** These are one hour multiple choice exams given in specific subject areas (see <http://sat.collegeboard.com/about-tets/sat-subject-tests> for list of tests offered). Some of the most competitive colleges require one or more of these tests for admission and other colleges and universities use them for placement in courses in college. Students need to ask whether the colleges to which they are applying require the Subject Tests.

**Advanced Placement Exams:** AP exams are 3 hour exams in specific subject areas and are designed to be taken upon the completion of an AP course or the equivalent. They are rigorous exams that include both multiple choice and essay sections. More than 1,400 colleges and universities accept AP credits. To learn more about AP exams go to <http://professional.collegeboard.com/testing/ap>. AP exams are scored on a scale of 1-5.

**TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language):** tests a student's ability in English and is a test for students for whom English is not the first language. The test measures skills in reading, listening, speaking, and writing in English and requires the student to combine two or more of these skills to respond to a question. It is usually an internet based exam given by appointment designated test centers. Paper based tests are offered only in remote areas. For more information go to [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org).

Source: College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## TEST PREPARATION RESOURCES

- **The MHS Literacy Center, Media Center and Math Lab**
  - Available free to students, the Literacy Center and Math Lab will offer one hour sessions before and after school in February and March to help students better understand the structure of the SAT. These sessions will help students get to know the reading, writing/language and math sections of the SAT. SAT prep books are available for students to borrow; staff can assist students with study groups and supporting materials at any time.
- **Naviance**
  - An online source available free to students; every MHS student can access personalized SAT Test prep through their Naviance account. Options include creating a study plan, test prep games, open discussions, specific lessons, flashcards, practice questions, practice tests, and more. Prep is personalized based on the upcoming test date and prior results. Students simply need to log in to their Naviance account through the link on d120.org and click the “Naviance Test Prep” link on the left hand side of the screen. The Naviance program also provides many additional resources that students can use to research colleges and career pathways.
- **Online Resources\***
  - [khanacademy.org/sat](https://www.khanacademy.org/sat): Link to your College Board account to receive personalized test prep resources and feedback for free!
  - [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org), SAT practice tests: 6 free full-length online practice tests
  - SAT Daily Practice app: answer a question each day and receive immediate feedback through [collegeboard.com](https://collegeboard.com).
  - Instant Practice Test scoring app: Take a complete SAT practice test (through [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org)) and use a smartphone to scan your answer sheet and receive an immediate score.
- **Community Resources\***
  - Contact your local library. Many, including Fremont Library, are offering test prep services at their locations. Oftentimes these services are free with a library membership. Ask how to use library online databases for test prep and if SAT study programs will be available for students.

The below list is for informational purposes only. We do not endorse any test preparation agency. ACT and SAT do provide their own test preparation materials. Visit their websites for more information.

### **Discovery Learning Institute**

The Commons  
40 Landover Parkway, Suite 3  
Hawthorn Woods, IL 60047  
847-438-5027  
[www.discoverylearninginstitute.com](http://www.discoverylearninginstitute.com)

### **One-to-One Learning Center**

778 Frontage Rd, Suite 108  
Northfield, IL 60093  
(847) 501-3300  
[www.one-to-one-lc.org](http://www.one-to-one-lc.org)

### **Glencoe Study Center**

706 Green Bay Rd  
Glencoe, IL 60022  
(847) 835-5430

### **Princeton Review**

2801 N. Sheffield, Suite 100  
Chicago, IL 60657  
(800) 273-8439  
[www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

### **Huntington Learning Center**

398 Half Day Rd  
Buffalo Grove, IL 60045  
(847) 634-2400

### **Test Watch Test Prep**

201 E. Dundee Rd.  
Palatine, IL 60074  
(847) 496-7070

### **North Shore Achievement Center**

348 Tudor Ct  
Glencoe, IL 60022  
(847) 835-7323

### **ZAPS Learning Company**

[www.zaps.com](http://www.zaps.com)

### **Mobile Academics**

[www.mobileacademics.com](http://www.mobileacademics.com)

(847) 858-8707

Tests: ACT Prep

# SAT/ACT SCORE CONVERSION CHARTS

## New SAT to ACT Concordance Table

Table 7							
New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score
1600	36	1330	28	1060	21	790	14
1590	35	1320	28	1050	20	780	14
1580	35	1310	28	1040	20	770	14
1570	35	1300	27	1030	20	760	14
1560	35	1290	27	1020	20	750	13
1550	34	1280	27	1010	19	740	13
1540	34	1270	26	1000	19	730	13
1530	34	1260	26	990	19	720	13
1520	34	1250	26	980	19	710	12
1510	33	1240	26	970	18	700	12
1500	33	1230	25	960	18	690	12
1490	33	1220	25	950	18	680	12
1480	32	1210	25	940	18	670	12
1470	32	1200	25	930	17	660	12
1460	32	1190	24	920	17	650	12
1450	32	1180	24	910	17	640	12
1440	31	1170	24	900	17	630	12
1430	31	1160	24	890	16	620	11
1420	31	1150	23	880	16	610	11
1410	30	1140	23	870	16	600	11
1400	30	1130	23	860	16	590	11
1390	30	1120	22	850	15	580	11
1380	29	1110	22	840	15	570	11
1370	29	1100	22	830	15	560	11
1360	29	1090	21	820	15		
1350	29	1080	21	810	15		
1340	28	1070	21	800	14		

For lower score points, there is not enough data to produce a valid concordance between the new SAT and ACT.

## New SAT Writing and Language to ACT English/Writing Concordance Table

Table 8							
New SAT Writing and Language (10-40)	ACT English/Writing Score	New SAT Writing and Language (10-40)	ACT English/Writing Score	New SAT Writing and Language (10-40)	ACT English/Writing Score	New SAT Writing and Language (10-40)	ACT English/Writing Score
40	34	34	28	28	21	22	15
39	33	33	26	27	20	21	14
38	33	32	25	26	19	20	13
37	32	31	24	25	18	19	13
36	30	30	23	24	17	18	12
35	29	29	22	23	16	17	11

Because of changes to the ACT writing test introduced in 2015, the concorded score for the ACT Combined English/Writing is only applicable if you took the ACT prior to September 2015.

For lower score points, there is not enough data to produce a valid concordance between the new SAT and ACT.

## IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The college application process has a beginning, middle, and an end. Keep this perspective in mind and your decision-making will be smooth. College applications may be completed online or in paper form. Each method has its own unique advantages. Most colleges today prefer the online format of the application.

### The Common Application

The Common Application is a not-for-profit organization that serves students and member institutions by providing an admission application online that students may submit to any of more than 500 member institutions. Membership is limited to colleges and universities that evaluate students using a holistic selection process. What this means for students is an easy method of applying to more than one college using the same application, thereby saving time entering data. To use the Common Application, you must be aware of some unique issues. Please see their website at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). If you have questions about the common application, see your counselor.

### Check List for the Application Process

- College applications are submitted online via the college website.
- Be sure to fill out your application carefully and completely.
- Retain copies of any applications, essays and correspondence sent for your own files.
- Each student must complete a transcript release form. **NOTE: Parent signature is required if you are under age 18.** This step may be completed during registration at the beginning of the school year.
- Teacher recommendations are requested by the student and processed electronically via Naviance. Ensure plenty of time for your teacher to reflect and write a complete and insightful letter on your behalf. Send a thank you afterwards as well!
- Student requests the transcript to be sent to the college via Naviance. The Counselor generates the official transcript electronically via Naviance. This process may take up to two weeks to complete.
- The Registrar mails transcripts to schools that do not accept electronic transcripts and can provide students with transcripts as necessary for scholarships.
- If the college requires SAT or ACT score reports, you must have your test scores sent to the schools by one of the following methods:
  - ✓ By having scores sent when you initially register for the test
  - ✓ By submitting an additional score report online at:  
[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)  
[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## COUNSELOR/TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Colleges seeking information on your motivation, abilities, creativity and academic strengths may request up to two teacher recommendations. Choose teachers to write who know you well, preferably 11th and 12th grade teachers. Some colleges will require recommendations from teachers as well as counselors. Most public universities do not require recommendations except for special circumstances. If you are foreign born, have been ill or had other events in your life which may have affected your academic record, it could be to your advantage to share this information with the Admissions Office. **A recommendation will have more credibility if you have signed the waiver of your right to see your recommendations.**

- See your teacher in person and ask them politely for a recommendation
- After they have agreed, go to Naviance – Family Connection and add them under colleges I'm applying to
- Complete the Teacher Recommendation Form
- Follow up with your teacher to see if they received your email
- Watch the progress of the letter in your Naviance account
- Send a Thank You note after the letter has been completed.

The **teacher's** recommendation is intended to write about you **in the context of his/her classroom**. The **counselor's** recommendation is to provide an **overall perspective of you as a student in the high school**.

A resume of activities inside and outside of school, leadership positions, interests, talent, and special class projects would also be helpful for both teachers and counselors to in order to write the recommendation. The more information you provide, the more likely you are to receive a meaningful, substantive recommendation. Utilize **Naviance – Family Connection** for a “résumé builder” which may be helpful to you in formatting this information. Generally, put the activities/awards/interests that are most important to you higher on the list, and for every activity indicate how you were involved and for how long. Be sure to briefly describe clubs or organizations so that their purpose is clear. Admissions officers can't be expected to keep track of the hundreds of organizations that exist in each high school and community across the country.

Teachers will send their recommendations via Naviance directly to the college.

Check Naviance – Family Connection two to three weeks after requesting the recommendation to see if it has been sent to the college. If not, gently remind the teacher/counselor of the deadline date. Be sure to follow up with a **thank you** note to the teacher/counselor.



## THE ESSAY

The importance of the college essay varies from college to college. Many private and some highly competitive state universities require an essay; typically, the more selective the school, the more important the essay is to the process. Colleges ask for an essay for two reasons: They want to see how well you write and communicate, and more importantly, they want to see you as an individual. Think of the essay as a "story" which elicits an emotion from the reader.

### Essay Topics

For the most part, essays will fall into three categories: the "You" question, the "Why Us" question, and the "Creative" question. The goal of all three types of questions is the same; to gather more personal and revealing insights into you as an individual for the admissions committee to consider.

#### **Tell us about yourself - the "You" question**

This open-ended question requires that you write about your best subject, YOU! Think about your personality and accomplishments and what best illustrates your strong points: who are you, what do you think and do, and what are your goals? Strive to show how your experiences have shaped you as an individual. If you write about adversity, like an illness or a death, accent the positive and emphasize what you've learned from the experience (how it affected you personally). Use details, not generalities.

There is no formula, no format for a perfect essay, but it can be one of the most carefully considered and influential parts of your application. Yours will be read; write it well - it is a significant way to help you in the evaluation process. It is your chance to show the real you and another way to make your application come alive.

#### **Tell us why you want to come here - the "Why Us" question**

Respond to this question by considering why you want a higher education and what you hope to accomplish with a college degree. Tell why you think that particular school is the right place for you, and what you personally will bring to the campus. Use examples after you've read about the college, hopefully visited, and talked with students on campus. Be as specific as possible in your examples.

#### **The Creative Questions**

Here you may be asked to respond to works of a particular author, a quotation, an important issue, how someone or something has influenced your life, or a humorous incident. Be sure to illustrate with examples how a book, quotation, or idea you discuss reflects your outlook and aspirations.

### **Essay Tips**

- Answer the question. Stick to the length that is requested.
- Write several drafts. Ask others to read your essay and offer their opinions.
- Write about something you care about; your passions.
- Don't use the essay to justify weaknesses in grades or test scores.
- Use vigorous language—strong verbs and precise nouns.
- Don't wait until the last minute. Get started during the summer after junior year.
- Write in your own "voice" and "style". Be yourself.
- Follow the five C's of essay writing: CONCISENESS, CLARITY, CANDOR, COMPLETENESS, and CONTRIBUTION.
- If humor is part of your style, feel free to use it. Do not use humor if you are not a humorous person.
- Check and re-check for correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Make sure you have one GREAT idea. Use specific details to make your writing come alive.
- Keep your audience in mind.
- Make sure the essay represents your own work.
- The idea should be yours.
- Be honest.

## THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

Few colleges actually require a college interview. It is used to make personal contact with an admissions counselor to put a face with your application. So take the interview seriously but do not over-rate its importance. Here are some suggestions for the college interview:

1. Know yourself. How do you learn best? What are your interests and goals? Is there any special area you'd like to explore? What are your strengths and weaknesses?
2. Be prepared. Be ready to ask questions as well as to answer them. Do your research; know the college. Don't ask a lot of questions about things that can easily be found in any college guidebook. But do ask at least one good question. If you do not, you may give the impression that you are unprepared or not really interested.
3. Dress neatly.
4. Meet your interviewer with a firm handshake and maintain eye contact as you talk and listen.
5. Be prepared to talk about yourself: your academic record, career interests, extracurricular activities, and your interest in this college.
6. Be yourself – do not pretend to be something or someone you are not.
7. Above all, RELAX! Interviews are meant to be informative to both parties.
8. Write thank you notes after interviews.

### **Questions you might anticipate in an interview**

1. How did you hear about us?
2. Why are you interested in us?
3. What other colleges are you looking at?
4. What is/are your favorite subjects and activities?
5. What are your strengths/weaknesses?
6. Do you have a specific major in mind? ("Undecided" is okay, just talk about one of your favorite courses or activities.)
7. Tell us about your high school.
8. Tell us a little bit about yourself.
9. What books have you read recently outside of required school reading?
10. What do you think you will contribute to our school?

## MAKING THE FINAL DECISION

After a year or more of working and worrying, it's done: you've received word from all the colleges to which you applied. All that remains in your college quest is making the final decision. Which college will you attend? This decision may be easy for students who were accepted to their first-choice college. But for the majority of students—those whose first choice denied their application or those who never had a clear first choice—that final decision can be difficult. If you're agonizing between two or more colleges, read on for help in making that big decision with confidence.

### Back to Basics

Before you look at the colleges themselves, go back to where you started—**yourself**. Think about what you want out of college. Have your priorities changed since you began the college search? Some students find that their references and goals change somewhat over the course of their college search, as they learn more about college and about themselves.

Take a few minutes to jot down the top five (or more) things you want out of your college experience. If you're feeling more ambitious, write a description of your ideal college. What do the classes look like? What kind of things do you envision yourself doing on the weekends? What interests do you plan on pursuing (academic or otherwise) while at college? The more details you can think of, the better. Then sit back and look at what you've written. Do one or more of the colleges you're considering match your description? Is there one college that has most of the characteristics that interest you?

### Dare to Compare

Every college has different strengths and weaknesses. One college might have a better reputation in your preferred major—but not the extracurricular activities you want. Another may have a strong program in your favorite extracurricular activity—but also a higher price tag. A third may seem like it has everything, except for the fact that it is much farther away from home than you're really comfortable with. It's easy to start thinking in circles when you try to compare two or more colleges that you genuinely like.

Here's one way to help get your thoughts in order. "Spread out all the acceptance letters and financial aid offers out on the dining room table," Laurice Sommers, coordinator for college partnerships and curricular enrichment for the Los Angeles Unified School District, said. On one blank sheet of paper for each college, make two columns—"like" and "dislike" (or "pro" and "con"). Then list the positive and negative aspects of each college. "This exercise helps students to look at the colleges objectively and provides a starting place for the family conversation," Sommers said.

### On the Road

One of the **best** ways to clarify your choices is to **visit the colleges**, even if you've been there before. During these visits, spend as much time as possible talking to **people**—current students, faculty members, coaches, and others. Many colleges allow prospective students to **stay overnight** in a residence hall to get a taste of student life. Read the student newspaper, **attend a class** or two, work out in the gym. Stand in the middle of campus, look around, and try to imagine yourself spending the next few years here. "**A visit can go a long way toward helping a student feel that the fit is right,**" Dave Fletcher, associate director of admission at Barry University (FL), said.

## **Financial Check**

If you need financial aid to afford college, cost may become the deciding factor. Compare financial aid offers carefully. If you'd be paying about the same at each college, look at what kind of aid each college offers. Colleges can vary widely in how much of their packages are grants (free money) versus loans (that you pay back).

Also, discuss with your parents the real cost of attending each college. Two colleges may have similar costs, but you may end up spending more to travel to a distant college versus one nearer home; or you may spend more at an urban campus, since living in a city is usually a bit more expensive. Also, look at the colleges' graduation rates. If a substantial number of students are spending five years to graduate from a less expensive school as compared to four years at one that is a bit more expensive, the one that seems the most expensive initially may wind up being a reasonable, if you can graduate on time! But don't feel obligated to go to the least expensive school just because it is the least expensive. It may be worth it to you and your family to pay a bit more if the college is a better match for your needs.

## **Consult with Others—but Make Your Own Decision**

Talk about your options with your family, friends, high school counselor, and teachers. Often, just discussing your choices and your thoughts about them can help you make up your mind. But don't let others make up your mind for you. What's right for your friends or impressive to your teachers is not necessarily right for you. "Although [others] shouldn't tell you where to attend, they can often offer insight you haven't thought about," Shere said.

## **The Gut Factor**

When it comes down to that final decision, many experts advise students to go with their gut feeling—that indefinable confidence that a particular college just "feels right." After all, you've done the research, you've put in the work of applying, and several admission offices have given you their vote of confidence. So go with the college that you feel comfortable with, the one that you're excited about—the one that you will call home.

## **Don't Stress**

You may feel that there's only one "right" choice, and that choosing "wrong" dooms you to four years of misery. In reality, you chose the colleges you applied to very carefully—and you'd probably be happy at any of them. Remember, too, that your choice is not necessarily final: a good number of students transfer every year. Of course, many more students don't transfer—which is a good sign that the majority of college students are happy with their choice.

*Jennifer Gross, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)*

## FINANCIAL AID

While it is important to meet your educational needs, you should not base your college selection solely on the cost as opposed to what is obtained for that cost. Typically colleges will meet the demonstrated need of the students they accept by offering financial aid. Packages usually consist of the following types of need-based assistance: loans, grants (also in the form of scholarships) and work-study. Another form of assistance is known as merit-based assistance. These awards are granted based on academic success or special talents, and usually are not affected by the financial need of the family.

### Sources of Financial Aid

- **Grant** Need-based money that does not have to be repaid. Sometimes they are also called “scholarships”.
- **Work-Study** Allows the student to work either on or near campus in a job arranged by the financial aid office.
- **Loan** Funds that usually have low interest rates, which must be repaid.

Financing a college education is a key factor in the final college decision. During your junior year it is important that you contact the post-secondary institutions of interest to obtain admissions and financial aid information. You should review your family financial situation and develop some reasonable parameters. Review the local scholarships in Naviance to familiarize yourself with scholarships and their usual deadline dates. Also, take the time to do your own research into private sources of funding.

As you move into your senior year begin to determine college costs, but don't eliminate any college or university because it looks too expensive; look carefully at financial aid opportunities.

Apply for admission, keeping in mind that many institutions require both an application for admission and financial aid before they can determine a student's chances for assistance. Investigate all possible sources of assistance including grants, scholarships, loans and part-time work. Be sure to stop by the CCRC and ask about scholarship resources and updates.

### Completing Financial Aid Forms

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** All families seeking financial aid must complete this form. In order to qualify for federal student aid you must meet some basic requirements including demonstrated financial need. Financial aid is calculated according to a formula established by law. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is a measure of your family's financial strength and is calculated from the information you report in the FAFSA.

You may complete the form online by visiting [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Online applications are processed faster and decrease the potential to submit mistakes. If you would like a paper application please stop in the College Career Resource Center.

**CSS/Profile** is a service of the College Board—a not-for-profit membership association of high schools, school systems, colleges and universities, and educational organizations. The College Board's mission is to connect students to college success. Colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools, and scholarship programs use the information collected on the PROFILE to help them award *nonfederal* student aid funds. The College Board does not award scholarship money or other financial aid. The PROFILE Application is customized for you based on the information you give when you register for the service. By completing the PROFILE, you provide the college with a complete picture of your family's financial circumstances. PROFILE also allows you to include explanations about special circumstances on the same application. Register your customized PROFILE application at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

**Unlike the FAFSA, the PROFILE is not required by every college and university. Please check to see if this is required by the colleges and universities to which you plan to apply. There is a fee for this service.**

### **In your Junior year:**

1. Contact colleges that interest you to obtain admissions and financial aid information.
2. Parents, review your family financial situation with your student and develop some realistic parameters.
3. Review the **Scholarship List on Naviance** to become familiar with local scholarships and their usual deadline dates.
4. Do your own research into private sources of funds. Become familiar with the financial aid web links provided on the **CCRC** homepage. Create an account with Fast Web to begin searching for scholarships on a national database.

### **In your Senior year:**

1. Determine college costs. Don't eliminate any college because of high costs at this point . . . look carefully at financial aid and average number of years to graduate.
2. **Apply** for admission. Many colleges require both an application for admission and financial aid before they can determine a student's chances for aid.
3. Investigate all possible sources of aid. The major sources of aid are grants, scholarships, loans and work. Use resources available at MHS which announce local scholarships available to our students.
4. August-September - both the student and parent should apply for a FSA ID # (fsaid.ed.gov). Attend the **Financial Aid Workshop** for an overview of financial aid.
5. The FAFSA opens October 1 – apply at fafsa.gov
6. Attend the **FAFSA Completion Workshop hosted by MHS** to help you understand and prepare for the process. Three good, general rules that apply to all financial aid application situations are:
  7. In about one week, you will receive the **Student Aid Report (SAR)**, which will identify the student's **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**. Verify that your SAR is correct; then sign Part II.
  8. Send the entire **SAR** to the Financial Aid Office(s) of the school(s) you plan to attend.
  9. Some private colleges also require the **CSS profile**. Find out **now** what **YOUR** schools need!
10. The financial aid administrator of the college develops a financial aid package, which is a mix of aid from various programs. It may include a grant, low interest loan, scholarship and work study plan.
11. The Financial Aid Office sends an award letter to the student.
12. The student must accept or decline the offer, sign the award letter and return it to the Financial Aid Office.
13. The college/university will either credit the student's account or issue checks directly to the student to pay the cost of education.

A mistake some families make is not applying for financial aid. It can never really be predicted whether or not you will qualify and many schools require the FAFSA in order to. Be aware of **SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS!** Scholarship and financial aid offers that show up in the mail and on the Web may be the tools of con artists designed to bilk parents and students eager to find ways to pay college expenses. Beware of the following phrases: "you've been scheduled to participate" or "chosen" or "specially selected," and/or the scholarship or service is "guaranteed or your money back," "you can't get this information anywhere else," "May I have your credit card or bank account number to register you or hold this scholarship?" Or, "This scholarship will cost some money."

One of the most frequently asked questions by students and parents during the college search is, "Where can we get information about financial aid and/or scholarships?" Fortunately, there are many resources available to research. The following scholarship sources are available for students and parents to explore.

## Resources for Financial Aid

### Colleges/Universities

Most colleges offer scholarships and are the best sources for possible scholarships including regional, academic, athletic and special talent scholarships. Each college also has a Net Price Calculator to help you survey costs.

### Naviance

Under the colleges tab there is a list of local scholarships that is constantly being updated. Check this REGULARLY to see when new scholarships become available to MHS students.

### scholarship websites

These websites allow students to create a profile to narrow down potential scholarships for free. It's like having a Google search set up for your own personal scholarship possibilities! Some examples can be found on the CCRC Scholarship Resource page found here.

### your library

Oftentimes local scholarships will be advertised at your library, check here to see if there are any options available for you.

### foundations, religious or community organizations, local businesses, or civic groups

Being a part of an organization offers another opportunity to be connected to potential scholarships. Be sure to ask specifically as you may not see advertisements – stay aware!

### organizations (including professional associations) related to your field of interest

If you know what you plan to study, look into organizations that are a part of that field as they may have opportunities to support you as you work toward that specific career path.

### ethnicity-based organizations

Organizations that support your specific ethnicity or unique background situation could have scholarship opportunities.

### your employer or your parents' employers

Ask at your workplace and have your parents check their workplace for scholarships that might not be well advertised but do exist.

### the financial aid office at a college or career school

After you have applied to and been accepted to your future school, look into their scholarship options for newly admitted students. Some scholarships are automatic based on specific factors that are a part of your application, but there are almost always more options that you can find and apply to separately after you have been admitted!

Remember, if you ever find a scholarship that asks you to pay a fee in order to apply, consider that to be a large red flag. Scholarships will not require a financial contribution as part of their application process.

One final point: the best way to help yourself receive scholarship funds is to perform well academically and get involved. A high GPA with a transcript full of demanding coursework, along with a complete resume of activities including volunteer hours and leadership experience will afford you many more options when scholarship opportunities become available.

**Financial Aid Events:** See the CCRC Webpage for an updated list of upcoming event dates, times and locations.

**MHS ISAC (Illinois Student Assistance Commission) Representative:** Available in the CCRC weekly to assist students and their families with FAFSA completion and a variety of other questions regarding financial aid.

**Although you may still have questions and concerns about financing your education, do not let the cost of school keep you from applying. Investigate all school opportunities and complete the necessary financial aid forms before making your final decision.**

## NAVIANCE – FAMILY CONNECTION

Naviance is a powerful, secure, web-based college research tool that will help you:

- **PLAN:** Naviance helps lead students in creating their post-high school plans. Students can look at their personality types and think about how their strengths and weaknesses and personality characteristics can be applied to planning their futures.
- **COMMUNICATE:** Naviance helps alert you to college rep visits and new opportunities. We send individual or group e-mails via Naviance about upcoming events, available scholarships, and more!
- **RESEARCH:** Naviance provides families with the ability to search for the most current information under various criteria: type of school, size, location, majors, sports, and more!
- **ANALYZE:** In the past, when families analyzed the GPAs and test scores needed to be accepted by a school, they were looking at national averages. Families can access this information at home in Naviance by looking up the Scattergrams of any school. And this is just the beginning of how you can dissect college admission trends!

Naviance provides useful, valuable information at your fingertips! Check out our Naviance link on the MHS web page.

### Signing in to your Family Connection account:

- Go to [www.d120.org](http://www.d120.org)
- Access the Naviance Link on left side of page
- Your username and password are the same as your PowerSchool information.

The screenshot shows the website for Mundelein High School District 120. The header includes the school logo, the name "Mundelein High School District 120", and the tagline "THE DOOR TO EVERY STUDENT'S FUTURE...". Navigation links for Home, Contact Us, News, Calendar, FAQ, and En Español are present. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features a large red banner with a white horse head logo and the hashtag #mundypride. Below the banner is a "CONNECT TO MHS" section with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. There are also links for "SPIRIT-WEAR STORE", "1:1 CHROMEBOOK INFO", "BUILDING Addition", and "MHS VIDEOS". The "IN THE NEWS" section contains several articles with "Read More" links. On the left sidebar, there is a "NAVIANCE" link under the "COMMUNITY" section, along with other links like "District 120 Board of Education", "PowerSchool", "Registration", "RevTrak", "Employment", "Education & Alumni Foundation", "Visual Identity Standards", "Report Bullying", and "SCHOOL MAILING LIST".



### Completing a college search

- Go to the colleges tab
- Use the links under “college research” to narrow down your choices

### Adding colleges you’re applying to

- After finding a college you are interested in, click the ADD TO LIST link. This will put the school in your colleges I’m thinking about list
- To move the list to colleges I’m applying to, click the check box next to the college’s name and push the move to application list button
- REMINDER: ***This is not your application!*** The application itself may include fees that need to be paid, essays, ACT scores and more. You are responsible for completing the requirements of the college.

### Requesting a transcript

- Under your resources heading on the left side of your screen in the colleges tab, click the transcripts link
- Click the link that matches your interest
- Click the “add request” box next to the name of the institution that you would like to request a transcript for

### Requesting a letter of recommendation from a teacher

- See your teacher in person and ask them politely
- After they have agreed, add them under colleges I’m applying to
- Complete the Teacher Recommendation Form
- Follow up with your teacher to see if they received your email

### Tracking your application status

- Watch your deadlines and see if forms have been uploaded under Colleges I’m Applying To
- If you are using the Common Application:
  - Create your account at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)
  - Be sure to match your CommonApp to Naviance on the Colleges I’m Applying To\_screen

## GLOSSARY

**Application Deadlines:** Every school decides for itself the cutoff date for candidate application. It is important to check the application deadline at each school where the student intends to apply.

**Application Fee:** A non-refundable fee usually charged for making application to a particular college.

**Candidate Agreement Date Schools:** Schools belonging to this agreement do not notify their applicants until a specified date, usually in mid-April, and request a decision from the student by May 1<sup>st</sup>, (the Candidate Reply Agreement date). They usually require a deposit to hold the applicant's space in the upcoming class.

**Consortium:** When there are several colleges and universities within close geographical proximity, they often join together in a consortium. The advantages of attending a college which is a member of a consortium are that the student has the resources of many libraries instead of just one; that he has the opportunity to take courses at a member institution which are not available at his own college; and that he can take advantage of many of the combined cultural and educational opportunities offered when the members of the consortium unite to present panel discussions, special lectures, and unusual courses.

**Co-operative Education:** Work experience related to student's college major.

**Counseling Center:** A resource center where counselors aid students in educational, vocational and personal growth.

**Course Load:** A course load is the number of hours the student is permitted to schedule in a given semester or quarter. This is usually fifteen hours on a semester system and sixteen hours on a quarter system.

**Credit Hours:** A credit is a certification given for the successful completion of academic work. Usually one recitation period per week for one semester or quarter represents an hour of academic work; thus a class which meets for three recitation periods a week provides three credit hours. A total of between 120 and 130 credit hours is usually required for graduation on a semester system; about 190-195 quarter hours are required on a quarter system.

**Deferred Admissions:** This policy allows the college to postpone making a decision about a candidate until additional data is collected. It is neither an acceptance nor rejection. It indicates the college is interested and would like to know more about the candidate.

**Degree:** A college diploma always indicates the amount and type of study in terms of various degrees. Two years of college may lead to an Associate of Arts Degree; four years of college study usually leads to a Bachelor's Degree.

**Department:** A department is a division of college which offers instruction in a specific branch of knowledge; example: the Psychology Department.

**Elective:** An elective is a course which the student selects to fulfill credit hours required for graduation.

**Financial Aid Grant:** This is usually an outright gift which is not repayable. However, it is usually based on need, not a reward for excellence.

**Financial Aid Scholarship:** An outright gift which is not repayable and usually signifies academic excellence. This can also be used to signify other kinds of excellence, such as athletic, musical talent, etc. In most cases, the amount is determined by need.

**Financially Independent Student:** Students are automatically independent and do not have to report parents' income or asset information if they: are at least 24 years of age, are veterans of the Armed Forces, are wards of the Court (or both parents are dead), or have legal dependents other than a spouse.

**Guaranteed Tuition:** A college may guarantee an entering freshman that tuition charges to him will not increase during the four years of attendance. Tuition is raised only for succeeding freshman classes.

**Honors Program:** An honors program is a plan designed to encourage superior students to engage in a more challenging program in their area of concentration. Students who succeed in meeting the stringent requirements of an honors program are usually granted "honor" degrees.

**Humanities:** These studies refer to the cultural world. The Humanities are usually classified as art, the classics, dramatic art, English, general and comparative literature, journalism, music, philosophy, religion and language. Many colleges divide their offerings into three divisions: humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

**Junior or Community College:** A junior college is a college offering a two-year program rather than a four-year program. A junior college usually offers vocational programs as well as the first two years of a four-year college program. The student in the vocational program usually goes directly into a vocation after graduation, while the student in the academic program usually transfers to a four-year college.

**Liberal Arts College:** is a term pertaining to the tradition of liberal education. It usually requires a nucleus of courses in the sciences, humanities, social sciences, fine arts, and foreign language. Students in this type of college are encouraged to develop interests and talents supplementing their major subjects and to take courses of cultural value.

**Matriculation:** This is a process whereby a student is accepted, pays his fees, and enrolls for his first classes. He thus has officially become a freshman student at the college. This term only is applied to freshmen or to a transfer student's first enrollment.

**Placement Test:** Placement tests are a battery of tests designed to assess students' aptitudes and level of achievement in various academic areas so that they can select the courses most appropriate for them.

**Practicum:** Practicum is college experience through study and practical work; example: student-teaching practicum.

**Prerequisite:** Prerequisite is a requirement which must be met before a certain course can be taken.

**Private College:** A private college is a college which is not supported by public taxes. It may be independent or church-related.

**Probation:** Students whose grade point average is below "C" sometimes are placed on scholastic probation. If the average is not raised to a certain prescribed level, the student is asked to withdraw.

**Provisional Acceptance:** All acceptances to colleges are provisional, based on the satisfactory completion of high school.

**Public College:** A public college is a college which is supported by public taxes.

**Quarter System:** The quarter system divides the academic year into fall, winter, spring and summer quarters; each quarter is ten to eleven weeks in duration.

**Registration:** Registration is a process at the beginning of each semester or quarter whereby the student selects the courses he will take, pays fees and sets up a class schedule for the semester or quarter.

**Remedial Courses:** Remedial courses are non-credit courses taken to help the student with a weak background in a particular area to prepare for a credit course in that area.

**ROTC:** Many colleges have units of the Reserve Officer's Training Corps and required military service after graduation offer two and four-year programs of military training, culminating in an officer's commission. In some colleges, credits for these courses can be applied toward fulfillment of degree requirements (Army, Air Force, and Navy).

**Rush Week:** Rush week is a period set aside by the Inter-fraternity and/or Pan-Hellenic councils with the approval of the college for fraternity and sorority invitations to prospective members.

**Student Counseling Service:** This service is provided to assist the student in solving personal, social, and academic problems.

**Study Abroad Programs:** Students can study in other countries as part of their college experience.

**Technical School:** This is a program directed toward vocational preparation only. The amount of time taken to complete the program will vary but is usually not longer than two years.

**Terminal Program:** This is a program of study in which the student completes his studies in a preselected period of time. This is a program directed toward vocational preparation only. The amount of time taken to complete the program will vary, but is usually not longer than two years.

**Transcript:** The transcript is the official record of a student's academic performance from the time of his entrance to a given institution to the end of the latest semester.

**Trimester:** Trimester is a division of the academic year into three terms, each term being fifteen to eighteen weeks in duration.

**Tuition:** Tuition is the charge for instruction, usually given per credit hour. For example, if a tuition charge is \$50 per credit hour, the charge for a three credit hour course will be \$150.

**Undergraduate:** An undergraduate is a student who has not received a bachelor's degree.

**University:** A university is an institution organized to provide education beyond high school, which serves to unite several separate colleges into one large administrative unit. For example, the University of Illinois combines several colleges, such as the College of Engineering, the College of Education, the College of Commerce and Business Administration, etc., into one university system.

**Wait Listed:** Students who are just below the admission acceptance level are sometimes put on a wait list at some selective colleges and universities. These students may be accepted for admission at a later date if space becomes available.

## NOTES