

## **This is NOT Your Mother's College Application Process**

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You went to college, right? You took the SAT's, had a quick chat with your guidance counselor, wrote the dreaded essays and sent them off. No big deal. Not any more! Today, your son or daughter is competing for spots at colleges with applicants from all over the world...you know, those kids who spent the summer in the rain forest looking for a cure for cancer and played second violin with the BSO on the weekends.

Success in today's college marketplace is about knowledge and planning.

### **Get Started Early**

You need to start early, gather as much information as you can, put together a plan and stick with it. From the first day of ninth grade through graduation, your student is adding to the list of qualifications that will differentiate them from other applicants - good grades, community service, special talents, athletics, student leadership.

Visiting college campuses can be packed into junior year or incorporated into family vacations and other trips throughout high school- as in "I am having dinner at the White House next month so why don't we visit Georgetown University?" No matter how you plan it, visit as many of your child's potential choices as possible. There is no better way to get a feel for the atmosphere than actually being on a college campus.

Starting the application process early in January of your junior year will invoke confidence in both students and parents and allow for the proper amount of time, energy and effort necessary to convey the student's whole story and help their application stand out.

### **Use Available Resources**

There is a wealth of information available to assist you and your student.

- Use your high school guidance counselor
- Utilize college search websites for your search: [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org),

- nacacnet.org, usnews.com, petersons.com, princetonreview.com
- Attend local College Fairs
  - Use a College Advisor

### **More Than a GPA**

Every college uses their own formula for choosing from the vast pool of applicants. Those formulas change year to year, and while we might never really figure them out, one thing is for sure- a strong GPA is only one factor in the decision. Extracurricular activities? Here is where they pay off. Interesting and committed community service is an excellent advantage. An essay from the heart about a topic your student is passionate about is just as important as an A+ in Advanced Physics. Students should recognize that their applications are viewed for more than just their GPA and test scores. It is essential that students showcase their uniqueness and personality in their essays and make every segment of their application is strong and concise.

There are many other important details to consider when you are preparing to begin the application process. It is beneficial to create a résumé that lists your academics achievements, activities, sports, and community service involvement. The résumé will be helpful during the application process as well as any scholarship applications that you will be required to complete.

### **Ready, Set, Where Should You Begin?**

Prior to the start of the application process, make sure your student has narrowed down their college list. Today's students apply to between 10-15 colleges, which can be divided into three lists.

List A should be **“Reach”** schools (1-3).

List B should be **“Target”** schools (5-10).

List C should be **“Highly Likely”** schools. (2-4).

Balance optimism with a realistic approach when narrowing final college selections into these lists.

Students should schedule a meeting with their guidance counselor to discuss list and qualifications.

### **Acceptance is in the Details**

Thoroughly review the specific application requirements applicable to each college on your list. Every school has different specifications. A careless

error on the application can cost your student admission to the college of their choice.

It is also advisable to develop a spreadsheet with the important requirements/deadlines.

You should also determine if the institution uses the Common App. Some Common App colleges have a supplemental application along with extra essay questions, so check ahead and be prepared. ([commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org))

Another important decision that needs to be made prior to beginning your applications is whether you will be applying Early Decision, Early Action or Regular Decision.

**Regular Decision** is the traditional application procedure where the majority of students are admitted.

**Early Decision** is a binding commitment. You are only allowed to apply to one college Early Decision.

**Early Action** is a non-binding commitment. Many colleges allow you to apply to as many Early Action programs as you like.

**Restrictive Early Action** is a new program that has been initiated at a few schools, which prohibits you applying to more than one Early Action school but is a non-binding agreement.

**Rolling Admission** gives students a considerable amount of time to apply and applicants are usually notified of their decision within a few weeks of applying.

It is essential that you read each college's specific Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision and Rolling Decision program requirements so as not to limit your college options.

Letters of recommendations are required for many college applications. Most students ask junior year teachers whom they either know well or have excelled in one of their classes. Be sure to send them a handwritten thank you note.

Essays are an essential part of your college application so start early the summer prior to senior year and display your writing skills. Review the essay prompts, brainstorm for ideas, and have someone proofread for spelling and grammar. Revise until you are completely satisfied with your essay.

Conquer Standardized testing starting in January of junior year: SATs, ACTs, and Subject Tests. Obtain tutoring if necessary and send test scores to each college.

Take note of the college's specific Financial Aid deadlines. The FASFA form (fafsa.org) needs to be completed between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>.

If you are applying to a music, art or theater program, you may need to request an audition or send a portfolio. Check each college website for specific information. If you want to play a sport in college, check the NCAA.org site for details and register before the summer of your senior year.

Arrange for an interview, and **prepare!** Study the college's website before your interview. Make certain that you dress appropriately and send a thank you note to the interviewer after the interview.

After your application has been submitted, follow up with each college admission's office to confirm receipt of your completed application materials.

### **Really Important Tips**

**TRIPLE** check your application for spelling and accuracy, pay application fees, and confirm that you have pressed the appropriate **SUBMIT** button.

It is extremely important that you make copies of all applications materials and keep them in a safe place.

### **How Parents Can Help.**

Start the process early by visit college campuses whenever you have an opportunity. It is imperative that you are realistic in your child's abilities and strengths so be diligent at locating appropriate college matches.

You can specifically assist with application management: keeping organized and filing the necessary materials. It is also helpful if you assist in the researching schools but listen carefully to your child and what they want from a college experience.

Discuss any financial or geographic restrictions before they apply or are admitted.

Review their applications and essays for errors and typos but do not complete any part of their application for them, especially the essays!

Allow your child to contact the college admissions department with any questions or to make appointments.

It is extremely helpful to your child to have your involvement but know your boundaries. Your support is crucial in your child's college application process.