



The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

A collaborative journey through the college application process

The OI Office of Academic and College Advisement
1495 South Verrado Way
Buckeye, AZ 85326

phone: 623-327-1757
fax: 623-241-9430

Becky Quigley	Co-Principal	bquigley@topamail.com
Jessica Sabo	Co-Principal	jsabo@topamail.com
John Yanke	School Counselor A-E	jyanke@topamail.com
Alanisse Williams	School Counselor F-Ll	alwilliams@topamail.com
Jenna Burden	School Counselor Lo-R	jburden@topamail.com
Karyn Smith	Director of School Counseling S-Z	karynsmith@topamail.com

Table of Contents

Mission, Vision, Introduction	2
BridgeU and Tools for Application Process	3
Transcript Process	4
College Roadmap Timeline	4
College Application Material Submission Chart	11
Introduction to College Admissions	12
Application Options	13
Standardized Testing Information	14
What Colleges Look For in Applicants	15
Factors to Consider in the College Search	17
Where to Get Information About Colleges	19
The College Interview	20
College Expenses / Financial Aid	20
Common Grants, Scholarships and Loans	22
Scholarship Resources	23
Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)	23

This document implements work from *College Essay Guy's College Admission Timeline* by Stacey Hernandez and College Essay Guy, www.stuy.edu, and the College Board.

Updated 3-12-2026

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

College Preparation Checklist	24
Useful Resources	25

Mission

The Mission of The OIAIS High School is to create an environment of professionalism and academic excellence, to maximize personal academic achievement, growth and discovery beyond test scores, while empowering dreams and leadership within their community.

Vision

The Vision of The OIAIS High School Office of Academic Advisory is to serve our diverse student body with a personal plan for all students guiding them through each year to graduation and beyond, fully prepared to contribute to society.

Introduction

We believe that the college and career planning process begins in the freshman year and continues to develop through the sophomore year as students begin to explore their interests, strengths, and future goals. During these early high school years, students should focus on selecting appropriate courses, maintaining strong academic performance, participating in extracurricular activities, and expanding their perspectives through reading and new experiences.

Throughout the **freshman and sophomore years**, the Academic Advising Office provides structured opportunities for exploration and planning. Freshmen participate in Counselor Introduction sessions in August, followed by ongoing small-group career exploration throughout the year, discussions about cumulative GPA and Arbor competencies, and lessons such as Understanding Your Transcript in the spring. Sophomores continue this process with activities focused on ECAP (Education and Career Action Plan) development, career pathway presentations such as West-MEC and ACE, and preparation for the PSAT 10, which is administered in March and may qualify students for the National Recognition Scholarship program. Sophomores also begin connecting potential careers to college majors, helping them better understand possible academic pathways.

The **junior year** is when the college search and application preparation process becomes more focused. Juniors participate in programs such as College Majors and Finding the Right College Fit, the PSAT/NMSQT in October, and ASVAB testing and interpretation sessions for career exploration. Students and families are invited to Junior Parent Night to learn more about the college planning process. In the spring, juniors participate in activities such as College Affordability Tools workshops, the ACT, and a Common Application workshop. During this year, academic advisors

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

will also begin preparing the student's Secondary School Report (SSR) and may meet with juniors individually, with parents invited to participate in college advisement meetings.

The **senior year** focuses on completing applications, understanding financial aid, and making final post-secondary decisions. The year begins with Senior Parent Night and Senior College Information sessions in August, followed by College Application Day and ECAP completion in September. Seniors set up their FSA ID in October to prepare for the FAFSA, and families are invited to attend FAFSA Family Night for assistance with financial aid applications. Additional support includes one-on-one meetings to understand financial aid awards, as well as opportunities to celebrate milestones such as Athletic Signing Day, Workforce small groups, and the school's Signing Day celebration. Seniors conclude the process by completing their Senior Exit Form, reflecting on their post-secondary plans.

The person most responsible for successfully completing this process is YOU. The Academic Advising Office is here to guide and support you, but you must take ownership of your college and career planning by making informed decisions and meeting all application requirements and deadlines.

BridgeU

BridgeU is an online system that allows students to explore colleges and majors, and stay informed regarding important college planning tasks and events. Seniors will use BridgeU to indicate where they'll be applying to college, and our registrar and academic advisors will use the system to submit required application documents to colleges.

**Changes will be coming to BridgeU in Fall of 2019 when they partner with The Common Application.

Log into BridgeU: <https://bridge-u.com/>

- If you have not set up your account check your email / spam folder for an email from **BridgeU Postman** and follow the steps
- Contact Mrs. Smith if you have trouble logging into BridgeU to reset the account
- Click on "**More**" at the bottom of the window to access items in left margin

Tools to Search for College Fit / Matches

Step 2: Profile Builder (needed for best fit on University Matches)

- Click on **Profile Builder** in the left margin
- Respond to each question for each category; these can be edited as information may change

Step 3: Researching Universities

- Click on **University Matches** after having completed the Profile Builder
- Research those Universities that best fit your profile

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- o Discard any university that does not interest you, it will be replaced by another university
- o You may **Shortlist** those universities you are giving strong consideration to applying

Step 4: Shortlist

- o You may add any university that you are interested in but do not see listed by clicking on **Add university or course (Major)**
- o By “**Course**” BridgeU is referring to a university **Major** of study

Tools for Requesting Transcripts

All transcripts will be submitted electronically through BridgeU. For those applying through The Common App, you will need to link your two accounts. See your academic advisor if you need support.

Step 1: Add the schools to your Application page in BridgeU

Step 2: Complete the Google Document Send Form Request which is available through your advisor.

If these steps are not completed, the transcript and other documents will not be sent. Transcript requests will be submitted each Friday excluding Fridays before an OI holiday. As such, it is imperative that the student provide enough time for transcripts to be processed and electronically submitted by college/university deadlines.

Your advisor will send the initial documents and the registrar will submit the mid-year and final transcript and graduation verification.

College Roadmap Timeline

Freshman Year

October:

- Visit Greater Phoenix College Fair

January:

- Registration for sophomore year - consider taking academically rigorous courses

April:

- Take state testing

Summer:

- Participate in your community or seek employment

General Timeline:

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- Grades – Grades are very important throughout your high school career for college applications. Work hard and try your best. Strive for Bs or better if college is your goal.
- Begin developing goals.
- Work on developing stronger study and time management skills.
- Create an activity log to track all of your extracurricular activities, summer experiences, academic honors, and other achievements.
- Consider community involvement and organizations that you may be interested in; get involved: committees, athletics, volunteering.
- Develop your Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) with your advisor.
- Familiarize yourself with the requirements of athletic recruiting, including NCAA and NAIA.
- Start to read about possible college majors and careers to better plan out your high school classes.
- Investigate summer opportunities: camps, internships, volunteer.
- Lightly start researching colleges.
- Consider Summer Reading: Expand your vocabulary and your world.

Parents: Start exploring how to pay for college.

Sophomore Year

September:

- Consider Personal Project options

October:

- Visit Greater Phoenix College Fair
- Meet with your advisor to discuss course planning and post-high school options

January:

- Registration for junior year - consider taking DP courses; ask questions about West-Mec and ASU dual enrollment opportunities

March:

- Take PSAT 10 exam

April:

- Participate in small group career exploration

May:

- Assess PSAT 10 exam results

June:

- Participate in your community or seek employment

General Admissions Timeline:

- Continue involvement in your non-academic extracurricular activities.
- Update your summer activities on your activity log.
- Grades - Strive for Bs or better.
- Challenge yourself academically by taking higher level courses.
- Research more scholarships.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- Update your ECAP Plan. (ongoing meetings with advisor)
- Meet with your academic advisor to discuss your junior year. Ask a lot of questions.
- Read more about possible college majors and careers to better plan out your high school classes.
- If you think you may play Division I or II sports in college, familiarize yourself with National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requirements.
- Investigate summer opportunities: camps, internships, volunteer work.
- Testing: The school will have you take the PSAT 10.
- Set a schedule to begin independent SAT preparation through Khan Academy or ACT preparation through ACT.
- Summer reading: Continue expanding your vocabulary and your world.
- Continue to explore your interest during the summer.

Parents: Continue researching how to pay for college and set up a college budget

Junior Year

October-November:

- Take PSAT / NMSQT. Use your results to prepare a study plan for the SAT.
- Apply for ACT / SAT Fee Waivers if eligible (See Mrs. Smith with any questions):
http://www.cfisd.net/files/3113/8636/2164/SAT_and_ACT_Fee_Waiver_Information.pdf
- Visit Greater Phoenix College Fair
- Take the ASVAB to link intellectual ability and career interests.

January:

- Register for senior year courses.
- Evaluate transcript to ensure you are meeting graduation requirements.

February

- ECAP sessions will begin. Parents will be invited.
- The Academic Advisor will meet with the Junior Class to discuss college lists.

March-April:

- It's a good idea to become familiar with the college resources available at school:
 - Become familiar with BridgeU.
 - The Academic Advising Office has a collection of College Reference Guides and Standardized Test prep materials.
 - Please visit individual college websites. You may find campus tours, admissions data, information regarding specific majors and programs, etc.
 - The Academic Advisor will meet with the Junior Class to discuss affording college tools and scholarship resources.

May:

- We recommend that you take your college entrance test (SAT or ACT) by May.
- If you are applying to a Service Academy (West Point, Annapolis, etc.), you must apply now to your Senator or Representative for a Service Academy Nomination.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Fall Semester

- Stay consistent with your non-academic extracurricular activities. Look for leadership roles in clubs and activities. Continue to update your activity log.
- Start your college search by attending a local college fair and high school presentations.
- Try a few college match searches, ie. Bridge U and Big Future with the College Board.
- Meet any college representatives that are on campus.
- Plan college visits.
- Have a family meeting to block out dates throughout junior year to visit colleges.
- Keep your grades up.
- Take a personality or career assessment such as YouScience or Do what you Are to learn more about your interests, strengths, and more. ASVAB also includes this.
- Continue challenging yourself academically with higher level classes.
- Schedule a meeting with your academic advisor to find out how you can get ahead and start planning your college admissions process.

Testing:

- The NSMQST/PSAT is a way to take advantage of scholarship opportunities. Many schools offer generous awards to top performers. It is important that you do your best work on test day.
- Take a practice ACT and SAT in the Fall to determine which might be better for you, then set up a testing timeline that includes your testing dates and your test study schedule.

Athletic Recruitment:

- Register for the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Clearinghouse or NAIA.
- Complete online athletic recruitment forms for each college you're considering. You'll find these on the college's website under "athletics."
- After you have completed the online recruitment forms, make your sports resume and recruitment videos.
- Spread out your correspondence with coaches by sending the resumes and video a few weeks after you complete the online forms.

Winter & Spring

- Investigate summer experiences.
- Register for senior year classes. Remember colleges will want to see a strong senior year course including five academic core classes.
- Continue visiting colleges.
- Build your college list.
- Research more scholarships.
- Request letters of recommendation in the Spring from two academic teachers from Junior year.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Testing:

- Select testing dates. Most likely the first ACT or SAT will take place between December and May.
- Take IB exams in May (if applicable).
- For highly selective colleges, you may have to take two to three SAT Subject Tests in May or June.

Athletes:

- Send your sports resume and video to college coaches and fill out the athletic recruitment surveys on college websites.

Fine & Performing Arts Students:

- Explore how the audition and portfolio process works for college admission.
- Build your portfolios and audition videos.

Set up a meeting with your academic advisor to ask questions about college choices, your senior year schedule, testing, and anything else you're curious about.

Summer

- Participate in summer experiences.
- Refine and finalize your college list. Be sure there is a balance in terms of admission probability (safety, target, and reach schools.)
- Research the type of applications required for each school on your list, as they vary.
- Write your Common Application personal statement.
- Complete the Common Application. The CA opens August 1st. You can begin the application in a separate doc and cut/paste into the CA after it opens.
- Visit more colleges.
- Find out the admission requirements and deadlines for schools on your list and create a spreadsheet to organize information. Research to see if an interview is offered or required at each school.
- Create a scholarship spreadsheet to list deadlines and requirements, so you can stay on top of the scholarship application process.

Senior Year

September:

- Senior meetings with academic advisors begin.

October-November:

- Submit early action applications

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

February:

- As soon as your Fall term grades are available, the Academic Advising Office will automatically send Mid-Term Reports to all of the colleges to which you have previously requested transcripts sent to. You do not need to request this.

May:

- Take IB exams.
- College Decision Day - May 1
- Complete Senior Exit Survey with counselor

June:

- The Academic Advising Office sends your final transcript and certification of graduation forms to the college that you will attend.

August & September:

- Confirm your final college list, application deadlines, and requirements.
- Write your college-specific supplemental essays.
- Have someone review your Common Application and personal statement.
- Continue to research scholarships and add requirements and deadlines to your list.
- Set up interviews with colleges if necessary.
- Visit the Greater Phoenix College Fair.
- If you have not already, request letters of recommendation from two academic teachers from Junior year and your academic advisor.
- Apply to scholarships as deadlines approach throughout the school year.
- Organize all financial aid deadlines and be ready to apply on time.
- See your academic advisor if you qualify for College Application Fee Waivers
- Early Action (EA) and Early Decision (ED) deadlines are typically around November 1. Complete and send out all EA and ED applications no later than late October.
- Schedule a meeting with your academic advisor to review your college list to get his or her feedback and review your application deadlines, and ask any questions you may have.
- Attend high school presentations and programs.
- Apply for financial aid - FAFSA opens October 1. If applying out-of-state, please note state deadlines as it impacts scholarship opportunities.
- If you are applying to a school that requires the CSS Profile for financial aid, begin this process.
- Make final college visits.
- Send test scores to your colleges.
- Request letters and transcripts to be sent to colleges by your academic advising office.

Parents: Start preparing financial aid paperwork.

December

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- Regular Decision (RD) deadlines are typically around January 1. Complete and send out all RD applications no later than mid-December. Remember school offices are closed for the holidays and will not be submitting transcripts.
- Write thank you notes to teachers who wrote recommendation letters.

January-March

- January: If deferred, send an email to your region/state/ country admissions representatives reaffirming your interest in the school as well as offering any updates (activities, achievements, awards, etc).
- Wait for application decisions.
- Check if campus housing is open.

March-April

- Colleges have until April 1 to release decisions.
- Plan visits to accepted colleges, if needed, in order to make your final college choice.
- Students need to accept and put a deposit down by May 1.
- Evaluate financial aid packages and scholarship offerings to figure out how to pay for college.
- Consider contacting colleges directly for additional aid.

May

- Take IB exams.
- Notify your academic advisor of your college decisions and scholarship opportunities.
- If you've been waitlisted, this is a good time to send in your "I'd like to stay on the waitlist" form as well as email to your designated admissions rep stating your interest in the school and offering any updates (activities, achievements, awards, etc).
- Sign-up for campus housing.

June-August

- Save for college.
- Receive any waitlist notifications.
- Attend orientation.
- Sign up for food plans and register for classes.
- Set up a meeting with an academic advisor at your college to plan your classes.
- Make travel and move-in arrangements.
- Find out what you need for your dorm and classes, and go shopping!
- Contact your roommate(s).
- Set up a bank account near or on campus.
- Apply for more scholarships.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College
Advisement Handbook

COLLEGE APPLICATION MATERIAL SUBMISSION CHART

Application Requirements	Responsible Party	How/When
Test Scores (SAT, Subject Tests, ACT)	Student	Send after last test taken via www.collegeboard.org or www.actstudent.org
Online Application	Student	Submit electronically by deadline (these vary)
Essays & Supplemental Forms Supplemental Letters	Student	Submit electronically or mail by deadline
SSR (Secondary School Report) or Counselor Recommendation	The Academic Advising Office	Sent electronically with transcript by deadline with counselor recommendation
Transcript	The Academic Advising Office	Sent electronically with SSR by deadline
School Profile	The Academic Advising Office	Sent electronically with transcript and SSR by deadline
Mid-Year Report (7th Semester Grades)	The Academic Advising Office	Sent once all fall semester grades are available
Teacher Letter of Recommendation	Teacher (NOT the Academic Advising Office)**	Usually via email link supplied by college or student or mailed by deadline **Unless submitting through BridgeU. Then advisor sends.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

INTRODUCTION TO COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

A large majority of Odyssey students will attend a college, whether a two or four year program. Most seniors apply to several colleges. The Academic Advising Office recommends that students apply to a maximum of no more than ten colleges. College admissions decisions are based primarily on:

- Your cumulative high school average through the end of your junior year and your first semester senior year grades;
- Your class rank;
- The degree to which you have challenged yourself academically in high school. Very selective colleges will want to see that applicants have taken IB courses; students may also consider taking AP exams independent of OI;
- Test scores on standardized exams such as the SAT and ACT, scores on the SAT Subject Tests, which may be required by some colleges;
- Your SSR and teacher recommendations;
- Extracurricular activities and any noteworthy talents or achievements;
- Demonstrated interest;
- Geographic distribution;
- A personal essay;
- An interview, wherever offered; and
- Other special factors include preference given to children of alumni, the ability to participate in varsity athletics, and applicants who would increase diversity on campus.

The Academic Advising Office encourages you to explore and research a wide variety of colleges. Seek out colleges that are likely to be a good “fit” for you, colleges having the kind of academic and social climate that you envision for your college experience. Your final list of college choices should include a range of schools based on the probability that they would offer admission students with GPAs and SAT scores comparable to yours. Please log in to BridgeU to research this or visit a colleges website and look for Common Data Set information. Use these statistics to help in determining colleges that would be considered reach, possible, target, and likely/safety schools for you.

- “Reach” – colleges that you are very interested in but that may be very difficult for you to gain admission to
- “Target” – colleges at which you have a possible chance of gaining admission based on prior years’ college admissions data
- “Safety” – colleges that are extremely likely to offer you admission. Also keep in mind “financial safety” schools

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Your high school average is based on all course grades through the end of your junior year. At the end of your first term senior year, your Mid-Year grades are sent to all of the colleges to which you have applied. The colleges will carefully evaluate these grades to make admissions decisions. A strong first term senior year can absolutely work to your advantage. A poor senior year first term, on the other hand, will adversely affect your chances for admission.

College admissions offices favorably note International Baccalaureate (IB) and other challenging classes taken in high school. According to one Dean of Admissions, "...the college will be looking foremost at the applicant's initiative in seeking out tough courses ... even at the expense of getting slightly lower grades." Choose a senior year program that is appropriately challenging, especially in the subject areas of interest to you. However, we want to caution you against taking a program that is too challenging for you to be successful. Do not overload your program with too many International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. You need to be able to demonstrate an ability to succeed in your program.

Second term senior year grades and certification of graduation are reported to the college you are planning to attend. In some cases, colleges request and evaluate your report card grades from the first or second marking period of your 2nd term senior year to assist in making a final decision. All colleges reserve the right to rescind your acceptance if your academic performance during your senior year does not meet its standards.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Early Application Options

- Early Decision (ED): Under the ED plan, a student may only apply to one school, he or she may not apply to any other college via the ED plan. The acceptance decision is binding.
- Early Decision II (ED II): Many competitive colleges offer an ED II plan. Though ED II application deadline is later than ED deadline, the acceptance decision is binding. If a student applied to College A via its ED plan, s/he may not apply to College B via its ED II plan until her/his application has been denied or deferred by College A.
- Early Action (EA): A student may apply to more than one college under an EA plan. The acceptance decision is not binding.
- Restrictive Early Action: This is a less common non-binding early application plan that includes restrictions regarding where else a student may apply via EA or ED.
- It is the responsibility of each student to carefully read and adhere to each college's ED and EA policy. It is the student's and family's responsibility to make sure that they are complying with the various colleges' ED and EA policies, as well as the various colleges' ED policies with regard to Financial Aid.

Regular Decision It usually refers to a particular deadline by which a college accepts the bulk of its applications. The deadline varies from college to college, which may be in December, January or February. The acceptance decision is not binding. Once admitted, the applicant has until May 1 to inform the college whether or not s/he chooses to attend the college.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Rolling Admissions A Rolling Admissions procedure means that the college's admissions office will review a student's application as soon as the completed file is received. It is in the student's best interest to submit his or her application as early as possible before the new class is filled to its capacity, especially for popular public universities. Decisions may be issued within a few weeks after they are made. Students should consult the college websites for priority filing dates that, if met, often make students eligible for additional scholarships. Many state universities as well as some private colleges use the rolling admissions process. The acceptance decision is not binding.

STANDARDIZED TESTING INFORMATION

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced and International Studies CEEB Code: 030763 (Both ACT and SAT)

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) examination measures critical reading skills, math problem-solving skills, and writing skills. Our juniors take the test in October. Only the junior year score will be submitted to the National Merit Scholarship Competition. If your score is in the 99th percentile, you may become a National Merit Semi-Finalist. Merit Finalists are selected during senior year and may receive college scholarships. However, PSAT/NMSQT scores are not a part of the college application requirements.

SAT is an examination that takes approximately four hours to complete. The SAT is designed to measure reading, mathematical, and writing skills. ACT or SAT scores are usually required by four year colleges in their admissions process. We recommend that you take the ACT and SAT first as a junior. If necessary, take it again in the fall of your senior year.

SAT Subject Tests are one hour in length. They are designed to measure your knowledge of a particular subject and your ability to apply that knowledge. Highly selective colleges often require or recommend one or more SAT Subject Test(s) for admission. Some colleges leave the choice of SAT Subject Tests up to the applicant while others have specific requirements. Be sure to carefully review colleges' admissions websites to determine the standardized testing requirements of each college and/or the standardized testing requirements of specific academic programs you might be considering within a certain college.

ACT Plus Writing is administered by ACT, Inc., and is an alternative form of assessment to the SAT Reasoning Test. In recent years, more students have taken the ACT than the SAT in the U.S. The ACT exam is offered "with Writing" or "without Writing". It is the student's responsibility to ensure that your ACT or SAT Score Reports are sent to the colleges to which you are applying. In general, colleges will consider your highest scores on each individual section of the SAT and your highest score on any individual SAT Subject Test.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Fee Waivers for the SAT and ACT tests are available to students who are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch. Eligible students may obtain these fee waivers from the Academic Advising Office.

Fee waivers are available to low-income 11th and 12th grade students in the U.S. or U.S. territories. U.S. citizens living outside the country may be able to have test fees waived. SAT Subject Test fee waivers are available for students in grades 9–12.

You're eligible for fee waivers if you say "yes" to any of the following:

- You're enrolled in or eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
- Your annual family income falls within the Income Eligibility Guidelines set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
- You're enrolled in a federal, state, or local program that aids students from low-income families (e.g., Federal TRIO programs such as Upward Bound).
- Your family receives public assistance.
- You live in federally subsidized public housing or a foster home, or are homeless.
- You are a ward of the state or an orphan.

Testing Accommodations:

- Please work with your academic advisor if you need assistance.
- Students with a documented disability may be able to receive testing accommodations. Please visit <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/special-circumstances/students-with-disabilities> and/or <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/accommodations.html> for more information.

ACT or SAT? (or Both)

Both the SAT and the ACT meet university entrance exam requirements and offer an online conversion table. Thus, universities will simply reference the conversion table for equivalency. Yet, please check with your schools of interest to ensure they do not require or prefer a particular exam.

While most scholars may perform equally on each exam there have been studies to show some scholars perform better on one or the other. We recommend that a scholar take both an ACT and SAT practice test to determine if they do indeed test better on a particular test or are more comfortable with a particular test. When a scholar has information from both tests, s/he will be better prepared to decide which test to pursue and set up a test preparation schedule. OI will provide opportunities each year, 9th-11th, to take the PSAT, but you would need to seek opportunities to take a practice ACT on your own.

WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR IN APPLICANTS

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- **Transcript**

Your cumulative average, the degree to which you have challenged yourself in high school, and the trend of your academic progress are the three factors colleges consider when evaluating candidates for admission. It is your responsibility to carefully read your transcript to ensure that it is correct.

- **Standardized Tests**

Your scores on standardized exams such as the ACT or SAT, and sometimes SAT Subject Tests, are required by many colleges.

- **Essay**

Your essay(s) is a very important part of your college application. The essay affords you an opportunity to express your individuality; *it will help to differentiate you from other candidates with similar averages and test scores*. You may write about your special interests, talents, and influential experiences and people. If your only extracurricular activity is a job, you might write about how your job has been meaningful to you and/or your family. The general rule is “The essay should be something only you could write”—it should be as specific as possible, avoid generalities, and be in your voice. It might be helpful to look at one of the many guides available regarding writing the successful college essay. While many students may utilize the Common Application and therefore only need one primary college essay (personal statement) for most colleges, many Common App colleges also ask for school specific supplements. Look at these very carefully once you know where you might apply, and give each supplement your full attention as you would your primary essay. Finally, begin these essays over the summer. The Common Application typically becomes available over the summer. Writing essays is very time consuming; it is in your best interest to complete a satisfactory draft over the summer.

- **Recommendations**

Most colleges require two teacher recommendations. We recommend this be a teacher you had in your junior year. Other significant adults who have supervised you in activities such as research, community service, employment, the arts, athletics, etc. may also write letters in support of your application. These supplementary letters of recommendation should specifically address your exceptional achievements in that specific field and should provide significant additional information not otherwise present in your application.

- **Senior Grades**

Your senior year grades are looked at very closely by the colleges, as is your senior year academic program. A challenging program is necessary for the most selective colleges. Most selective colleges will require mid-year senior grades. In addition, colleges often review the courses you are taking in your second semester senior year to make sure that you are continuing to meet their standards of academic rigor.

- **Activities/Extracurriculars**

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Colleges are also interested in what you do outside of the classroom. A student who has shown significant dedication and commitment to one or two extracurricular activities is very desirable. In addition, colleges want to see that students have made productive use of their summer vacations. This is another area where you differentiate yourself from other candidates.

- **Demonstrated Interest**

Generally speaking, colleges want to see that students have shown an interest in them, beyond submitting the application. This is due to their need to predict, maintain or improve their “yield”...the percentage of admitted students who enroll. Yield is a critical statistic for many colleges. This is particularly true of small to medium sized colleges. Demonstrating interest in a college can be done in a variety of fashions, including campus visits, meeting their representatives at college fairs, high school visits, interviews, etc.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN THE COLLEGE SEARCH

Choosing a college is one of the most important decisions you will make as you prepare to graduate from high school. In order to make an intelligent choice, you need to gather a great deal of information and to consider your specific requirements. Considerations such as who you are, what you hope to achieve, and the kind of environment and location in which you want to live are all important factors to consider in creating a list of colleges that would likely be a good “match”, or “fit”, for you. Try to learn as much as possible about various colleges: which schools offer the kinds of programs in which you are interested, what their application requirements are, how much it will cost to finance your education at those schools, and so forth. The ideal school for your best friend may not be the best school for you; neither will schools with “name brand recognition” necessarily be the best fit for you. It is important to judge a school by more than its reputation. The questions below are designed to help you evaluate many of the factors you should consider when choosing colleges to which you might apply.

Your Interests

1. What fields and subjects interest you the most? If you are unsure about your academic interests, it might be best to look for colleges that offer a wide range of programs.
2. Why do you really want to go to college? What do you expect to gain from the experience?
3. Based on your academic history, what do you feel are your strengths?

Location

1. Do you prefer a school in a large city, a college town close to a city, or a rural setting far from a major city?
2. Do you prefer a school close to home where you will be able to visit home easily for a weekend or Thanksgiving break?
3. Do you prefer a school where it'll be easy and financially feasible for your family to visit you?

Academics

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

1. Does the college offer the program(s) in which you are interested?
2. Is the college known for a particular program?
3. What are the school's policies regarding course requirements, selecting a major, double majoring, and cross registering at neighboring schools?
4. What are the strengths or weaknesses of the program(s) in which you are interested?
5. What is the student-to-teacher ratio? How many students are there in a typical class?
6. Are most classes taught by full-time professors or by graduate students?
7. How accessible are the college's professors? Do undergraduates have the opportunity to assist professors in their research?
8. Is there a core curriculum? Are there distribution requirements? Are decisions on curriculum left largely up to the student?
9. Does the school accept IB credit? Is there a minimum score needed?
10. Is there an honors program available at the school? Who is eligible to participate?
11. Does the college offer/encourage study abroad or at another U.S. campus?
12. What percentage of freshmen return for their sophomore year?
13. Do most of the graduates go on to graduate school immediately upon graduation? What is the rate of acceptance at medical, law, or business schools?
14. How many graduates go right into the marketplace? Is there a career services office that assists students with finding summer internships and jobs after graduation? Which firms recruit on campus?
15. Are there opportunities for hands-on work experiences while students are in college? Do any of these pay a salary or stipend?

Size and Student Population

1. Smaller schools may be more nurturing and supportive whereas larger schools may offer greater diversity, both academically and socially. Some small colleges belong to consortia that enable them to offer greater resources while maintaining their supportive atmospheres.
2. Is the college small (fewer than 1000 students), medium-sized, or large (more than 15,000)? Does enrollment matter to you? Does the college have graduate students?
3. Is the college ethnically/racially/culturally diverse?
4. Does the college attract students from all over the United States and the world or are the majority of students from the immediate region?
5. What are the students like? Historically, what kinds of students are interested in this particular college and why?
6. What kinds of student organizations are active on campus (political groups, college newspaper, student government, volunteer/mentoring groups, etc.)?
7. What is the male/female ratio?
8. What kind of religious life exists on campus?
9. Can the school meet my special needs (dietary/religious/medical/academic)?
10. Do students primarily live on campus, off-campus, or do most students commute from home?

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

11. What is social life on campus like? How important are fraternities and sororities? Varsity sports?

Financial Factors

1. How much will it cost to attend this school (including tuition, fees, room and board, books, travel to and from campus, and spending money)? Use the institution's net price calculator to get an early estimate.
2. Will I qualify for financial aid? Is the amount of financial aid offered negotiable? Does the college offer academic merit scholarships (as opposed to colleges that offer scholarships solely based on the family's "Financial Need")?
3. Will I go on to graduate school? Will this affect how much I can spend on my undergraduate education?

Facilities

1. How are the college's libraries and computer facilities?
2. Are computers required for incoming freshmen?
3. Are there adequate sports and recreational facilities (e.g., a swimming pool, athletic fields for non-varsity players, music practice rooms)?
4. Is a wide variety of intercollegiate and intramural sports programs available?

Living Conditions/Safety

1. Is campus housing readily available? Is on-campus housing guaranteed for all four years?
2. Are the dorms coed? Are the bathrooms? Are single sex dorms available?
3. Are alternative housing arrangements available?
4. How safe is the campus? How does the college ensure safety on campus?

WHERE TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGES

There are many ways to learn about the hundreds of excellent colleges in the U.S. and abroad. Take advantage of the resources available at OI, and research and try to visit those college campuses in which you are most interested.

- College websites, especially their admissions pages
- Various college guides (Fiske, Insider's Guide, etc.)
- The College Office bulletin boards in Building A
- Your college counselors are available in the Academic Advisement Office across from the main office
- Junior College Information Night
- Attend open houses held by various colleges
- Visit the National College Fair in Greater Phoenix
- The Occupational Outlook Handbook is an excellent source of information about careers and the educational preparation needed for these careers.
- College campus visits

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- College admissions representatives will visit OI during the school day in the fall of the senior year to conduct information sessions and to answer your questions

THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

As part of the application process, some colleges offer you the opportunity to have an interview with either an admissions officer or one of its area alumni. The Academic Advisors Office encourages you to seek out interviews in order to enhance your application. Once you are given the date, time, and place of the interview, the interviewer's name and title, and the interviewer's telephone number, make sure you know how to get to the location of the interview and how long the trip will take.

First impressions are important, so remember to dress appropriately for your interview. There is no need to wear a suit and tie; just look like the best version of your regular self. You should arrive at the interview ten to fifteen minutes early. Before each college interview, spend some time thinking about why you are interested in that specific college. Research special programs. Review the college's website and any other materials the college has sent you. Know what the college's mission or philosophy is. During your interview, show an interest in the college and its academic and extra-curricular programs.

Although there is no way to know exactly what you will be asked in an interview, you should be prepared to discuss such topics as:

- Why do I want to go to this particular college?
- What could I contribute to the college community?
- What are my goals, both personal and academic?
- What am I interested in (academics as well as interests outside of the classroom)?
- What do I expect to gain from my college experience?
- What are/might be my career plans?
- What did I do last summer and what did it mean to me?
- What are my favorite books?
- What was the last book I read for pleasure?

When you meet the interviewer, shake hands. Try to maintain eye contact and not answer questions with one word or yes/no answers. Do not be afraid to say that you are undecided about your major or future plans. Show the interviewer that you are a mature, confident, intelligent, and independent young adult. Finally, be polite. Thank the interviewer as you leave. You should send a Thank You note or email to the interviewer and express your appreciation (make sure you know his/her full name and title). Your conduct in the interview can have a positive or negative effect on your candidacy.

COLLEGE EXPENSES/FINANCIAL AID

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Financial Aid helps meet the needs of your college education. How much financial aid you are offered may be a large factor in determining which college you attend. This section will give you an overview of what Financial Aid means and how you apply for it, but please remember, this is only a brief outline.

It is important that your family's tax forms and monetary records are up to date. There are numerous, crucial financial aid deadlines set by the colleges. It is imperative to carefully read the financial aid requirements of all the colleges to which you are applying. Generally speaking, the earlier you and your family complete all required financial aid forms, the more aid a student can expect to receive. Financial aid forms have to be filled out every year you attend college.

Financial aid offered by colleges can be based on a family's "Need" or "Merit". Financial Need is defined as the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college (tuition, room, board, etc.) and what you and your family are expected to pay towards your college education. Your yearly Student Aid Index (SAI) is determined by completing the FAFSA form on www.fafsa.ed.gov, in many cases the CSS Profile form on www.collegeboard.org, and in some cases the specific college's own financial aid form(s). In determining a family's Expected Family Contribution (EFC), colleges consider a number of factors including: income, assets, the number of people in the family, and in many cases the value of the family's home.

Merit aid is aid awarded because applicants possess desirable characteristics for a given institution. Academic and athletic scholarships are two common types of institutional merit awards.

When you begin your college search, you should not rule out any school because of cost. Many colleges offer individual students a tremendous amount of financial aid. "Tuition discounting" is common practice among private colleges. However, your final list of college choices should include academic and financial "safety" schools. You can estimate the cost of attending a particular school by using the Net Price Calculator. The Net Price Calculator is a tool that you can use to estimate your "net price" to attend a particular college or university. Net price is the difference between the "sticker" price (full cost) to attend a specific college, minus any grants and scholarships for which you may be eligible. For more information, visit this link: <http://studentnpc.collegeboard.org/what-is-a-net-price-calculator> Many colleges also provide links directly from their webpages.

Some types of financial aid are given to the student in the form of grants or scholarships, the money that does not need to be repaid. Other financial aid comes in the form of loans that need to be repaid after graduation and/or work study that the student needs to earn through a campus job.

Once the Financial Aid Offices at each college to which you have been accepted have reviewed your family's financial information, each will send you a financial aid award letter. The award letter will indicate the types of financial aid you will be receiving and the amounts of each type of aid. The award amount varies from college to college. If for any reason you feel that your aid award is insufficient, or if your family's income has recently decreased for some reason, please contact the colleges' financial aid offices.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Common Grants, Scholarships and Loans

Grants and Scholarships

Sources of Aid	Monetary Value	How to Apply
College Scholarships	Varies, some are need-based, others merit-based	Complete the FAFSA, CSS Profile and/or individual colleges' own financial aid application
Federal Pell Grant	Varies, based on financial need	Complete the FAFSA
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	Varies, based on financial need	Complete the FAFSA
National Merit & National Achievement Scholarships	Varies	Your junior year PSAT/NMSQT result
ROTC Scholarships (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps)	Pays for tuition, books, fees, and other expenses	Please visit www.rotc.com
Various private scholarships	Varies, based on various different factors	Apply directly to scholarship sources Check OI website and your topmail

Loans

Loan Type	Description	How to Apply
Federal Direct Loan	Students borrow money to help pay for college Please visit www.studentaid.ed.gov for details	Complete the FAFSA, college financial aid offices help you with the loan process
Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)	Parents borrow money to help pay for college Please visit www.studentaid.ed.gov for details	Complete the FAFSA, college financial aid offices help you with the loan process
Private Student Loans or Supplemental Loans or Alternative Loans	With the soaring costs of a four year college education, some students seek additional loans	Be a smart consumer, look for loans with the lowest interest rates and best repayment options

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

Scholarship Resources

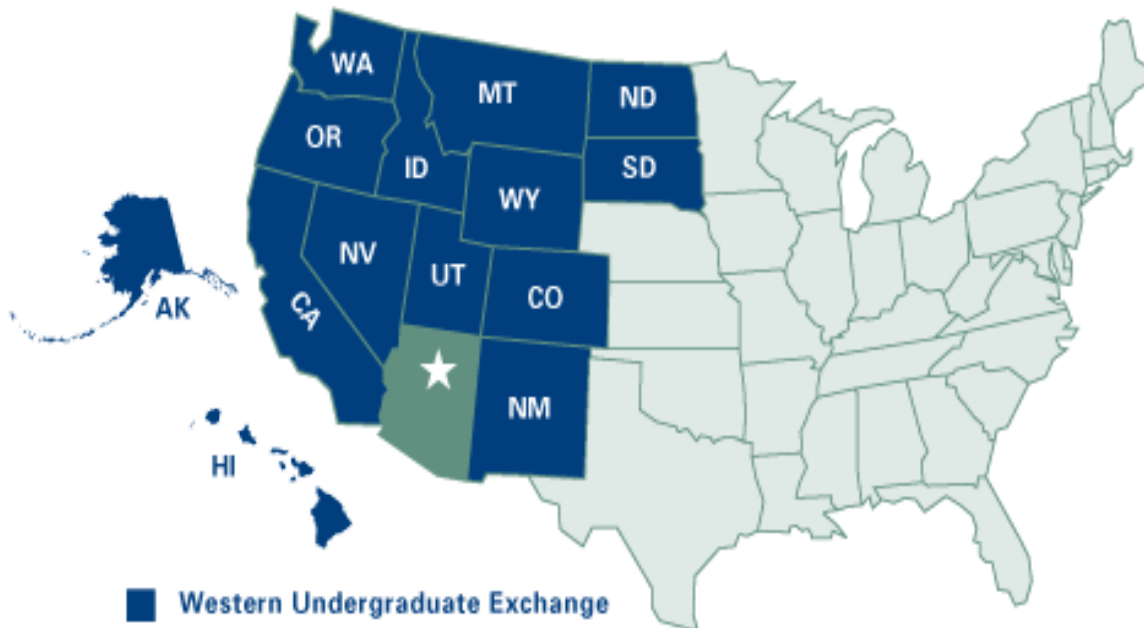
OI does work with a scholarship portal and log in is given junior year or upon request. However, there are many resources that go untapped. Millions of dollars go unused as the opportunities are not pursued. Please note that we strongly encourage you to avoid groups/people/organizations who offer scholarship lists for which you pre-pay.

1. www.scholarships.com
2. www.smartscholar.com
3. www.wiredscholar.com
4. www.collegenet.com
5. www.fastweb.com
6. www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search
7. www.fastweb.com
8. www.usfirst.org/scholarshipsearch.aspx
9. studentaid.ed.gov/types/grants-scholarships/finding-scholarships
10. www.scholar-box.com/
11. www.cappex.com
12. **RAISE.ME:** www.raise.me/educator RaiseMe helps students in 9th – 12th grades to discover colleges and earn scholarships for their academic and extracurricular achievements throughout high school. These scholarships are called “Micro-Scholarships”

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE)

WUE, www.wiche.edu/wue (WUE_Map.png), is a student exchange program providing select (restrictions apply) students an opportunity to attend school in participating states at a reduced tuition. From their website: “Students who are residents of WICHE states are eligible to request a reduced tuition rate of 150% of resident tuition at participating two- and four-year college programs outside of their home state.” Participating states include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook



FAQ for WUE: <http://www.wiche.edu/askWICHE-wue>

“Although some institutions automatically consider applicants from a WICHE state for the WUE rate, **many of them require that you *request* the special WUE rate at the time of application for admission, or that you apply for the WUE rate through their scholarship or financial aid office.**

Please note that WICHE does not set qualification criteria for WUE applicants, nor do we process applications or participate in the student selection process. Equally important, the WUE reduced tuition rate is **not** automatically awarded to all eligible candidates. Most institutions limit the number of new WUE awards each academic year, so apply early.”

COLLEGE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

I. Checklist of required/optional items for college application before I submit my application:

1. ___ I have reviewed the college website/catalog carefully.
2. ___ I have visited the campus.
3. ___ I have met with an admissions representative.
4. ___ I have checked that the college offers the programs/majors I am interested in.
5. ___ I have taken all required standardized tests (SAT, SAT Subjects and/ACT plus Writing)
6. ___ I am ready to send my standardized test scores to all of the colleges

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

where they are required.

7. ___ I have met with my academic advisor.
8. ___ I know the deadlines for submitting all of my college applications.
9. ___ I have completed my essay(s).
10. ___ I have completed my colleges' supplemental applications.
11. ___ I have checked my high school transcript carefully and submitted necessary corrections.
12. ___ My family and I are prepared to complete all required financial aid forms (CSS profile, FAFSA...)

II. Things to Do after Receiving Acceptances:

1. ___ My acceptance deposit has been sent to the college I will be attending.
2. ___ I have informed colleges that have accepted me that I am not going to attend.
3. ___ I have completed my housing request form.
4. ___ I have found off-campus housing, if necessary.
5. ___ I have completed any requested pre-registration materials.

Useful Resources

Many of the following books are available in public libraries and local bookstores:

- *Architecture Schools in North America*. Peterson's Guides.
- *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*. Barron's Educational Series.
- *The Best 380 Colleges*. The Princeton Review.
- *Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think About Colleges*. Loren Pope.
- *The Princeton Review: A Guide to College Majors*.
- *College Board: College Handbook*. The College Board.
- *College Cost Book*. The College Board.
- *College Handbook, Index of Majors*. The College Board.
- *Comparative Guide to American Colleges*. Harper and Row.
- *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*. Edward B. Fiske.
- *The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College*. Viking Penguin. *Guide to College Majors*. Chronicle Guidance Publications, Inc.
- *The Hidden Ivies: Thirty Colleges of Excellence*. Harper Collins.
- *How to Get an Ivy League Education at a State University*. Avon Books.
- *Looking Beyond the Ivy League: Finding the College That's Right for You*. Loren Pope *Peterson's Competitive Colleges*. Peterson's Guides.
- *Peterson's Guide to Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students*. Peterson's Guides.
- *Peterson's Guide to Four Year Colleges*. Peterson's Guides, Inc.
- *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be*. Frank Bruni
- *You Can Afford College: The Family Guide to Meeting College Costs*. Doubleday Dell.

The Odyssey Institute for Advanced & International Studies College Advisement Handbook

- *College Essay Essentials* Ethan Sawyer

More Resources: Helpful Websites

College Information, Financial Aid Information, and Scholarship Search Tools

- BridgeU - bridge-u.com
- College Results Online- www.collegeresults.org
- Federal Aid - www.fafsa.ed.gov
- FAFSA Estimator - <https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/>
- FAFSA - <http://studentaid.ed.gov>
- www.finaid.org
- www.scholarships.com
- The College Board – www.collegeboard.org
- Common Application - www.commonapp.org
- www.nacacnet.org
- www.collegeview.com
- www.collegeanswer.com
- www.collegedata.com
- www.ecampustours.com
- <http://www.ucan-network.org/>
- www.meritaid.com
- The Project on Student Debt-<http://ticas.org/posd/home>