Suggestions for a Successful College Search

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What are my child’s options after high school?

- Four-year institutions: Liberal Arts College or a Research University
- Military Academy: secure nomination in junior year or VERY early senior year
- Two year colleges: community colleges, junior colleges and technical colleges
- Direct entry into the world of work
- Enlistment into the military
- Proprietary schools
10 Things Parents May Consider When Thinking of College Options

- Type of College
- Distance from Home
- Size of College
- Area of Interest/Program of Study
- Safety of area
- Academic Rigor of Institution
- Social or Extracurricular interests
- Cost of Attendance
- Financial Aid/Scholarship Opportunities
- Participant in the Tuition Exchange/Remission Program

10 Things Students May Consider When Thinking of College Options

- Location
- Size
- Quality of Education
- Appearance of Campus
- Dorms
- Majors
- Greek Life
- Sports
- Food
- Political Leanings
Ways to Gather Information on Schools

- Websites
- Guidebooks
- College Fairs
  - Week of October 24
- College Literature
- Visiting the School
- Virtual Visits/Fairs
- Word of Mouth

The Application

- College's Own Application
  - Online
- Common Application
  - Currently used more than 1000 colleges and universities
  - Commonapp.org
  - Online version
  - Some colleges require supplement(s)
- The Coalition Application
  - 150 national colleges & universities
  - Coalitionforcollegeaccess.org
  - Can start adding information to locker as a first year student
  - Focused on providing access to college with free planning tools
- Apply Texas Application
  - Texas public and private colleges
  - Online version
  - Applytexas.org
  - Schools have different admission requirements
What Do Schools Consider?

- Academic Record
- Standardized Test Scores
- Essay
- Recommendations
- Extra Curricular Activities
- Interviews

Academic Record

- Most important element
- Includes: Grades earned, strength of courses taken, rank in class, competitiveness of school curriculum
- Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, Honors, Advanced or Accelerated courses show challenge in preparation for college
Academic Record

- A solid high school background will include the following coursework:
  - 4 years of English
  - 4 units of Math (check to see the school’s minimum requirement)
  - 4 units of Science
  - 4 units of Social Science
  - 2 units of foreign language (3 are recommended)
  - 1 unit of academic elective or fine arts elective (depending on school being considered)

Standardized Testing

- Many institutions continue a test optional philosophy. May require a different component in lieu of a test score.
- Most schools will look at SAT OR ACT (don’t require one or the other)
- SAT comprised of Evidence Based Reading and Writing and Math (www.collegeboard.com)
- ACT has English, Math, Science, and Reading Components (www.actstudent.org)
- You should research each school’s requirements and schedule tests for spring of junior year/fall of senior year.
Essay

- Original example of student’s work to provide further insight into the candidate and allow a multi-dimensional understanding of the student
- Student should write an essay that is reflective of themselves
- Essay should aim to be 500-750 words
- Do not repeat what is also written elsewhere in the application

Recommendations

- Many schools require a recommendation from a high school counselor
- Teacher recommendation may be optional, but can provide a greater understanding of the academic strengths of the student
- Parents may be encouraged to write on behalf of their student
- Students may ask recommendation writers to submit electronic recommendations or to submit on school letterhead.
- Give teachers and counselor 3 weeks for completion of recommendation
Extracurricular Activities

- Reviewed to assess what a candidate has accomplished outside of the classroom
- Can occur inside or outside of the school (i.e., Scouting, church, work, volunteer work)
- Be sure to include: leadership positions, depth of involvement, diversity of experiences

Interview

- Gives the college a chance to get to know the person on the application
- Interview may be required in some situations (i.e., scholarships)
- Interviews are held at the school and locally by both admission officers and alumni
- Ask if you can interview so that you may learn more about the school.
Admission Application Options

- **Open enrollment**: the college typically admits all students with a high school diploma regardless of class rank or test scores.
- **Rolling admission**: the college reviews complete applications on a rolling basis and usually notifies the student within 3 or 4 weeks.
- **Regular decision**: the college has a deadline by which most applicants apply and it notifies all students around the same time—usually at the end of March or beginning of April.
- **Early decision/early action**

Early Decision/Early Action

- **Early Decision**—students make a commitment to a first choice school that if admitted, they definitely will attend.
- **Early Action**—students make application to one or sometimes more schools and receive a decision well in advance of the college’s usual response date. Students are not obligated to accept the admission offer.
- **Single Choice Early Action**—students make application to only ONE school and receive a decision well in advance of the college’s usual response date. Students are not obligated to accept the admission offer.
Final Thoughts

- The student should drive this process...you are in the back seat gently encouraging. The student will be at the school for 4 years and they need to be comfortable with the school of choice. The student needs to be at a school where they will succeed academically and socially.
- The list should include both academic and financial reach schools, comfort schools and safety schools. This covers all options for the student and the family.
- TE Data Sheet provides introductory research