

Life

. . . after
High School!



**Important steps and information for
College and/or military choices**

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Freshman Year

Getting the most out of your high school years takes planning -- opening doors and paving the way for a successful future begins NOW!

Choose challenging, meaningful courses...

For example...Are you interested in becoming a physical therapist? Plan on taking as many upper level math and science courses as possible. Are you interested in pursuing a career in architecture? Check out what the Drafting & Design program at the Erie County Technical School has to offer. *You can go to vo-tech and remain on a college-prep track!*

Homework and studying -- there is a difference you know...

You may not be assigned homework every night, but you do need to study every night! Homework is answering problems 1 – 20 on page 56 or reading chapter five in your history book. Studying is bringing your history book home and *rereading* chapter five or *reviewing* the terms in chapter five because the terms may appear on an upcoming test. In order to access your long-term memory, the part of your memory that's going to help you recall information for tests and final exams, you need to study on a regular basis.

Get organized...

At this time in your life you can no longer expect someone else to remember your homework assignments or where you are supposed to be each day. Keeping an agenda book or calendar of some sort is vital! North East High School provides each student with an agenda book. If you prefer a different style (daily, weekly, or monthly) add this item to your list of school supplies.

Keep in mind...it doesn't matter if it costs \$15 or 50 cents – what matters most is that you use it!!!

Having trouble in a class? Follow these easy steps...

1. Talk with your teacher...Do I owe any assignments/tests, are you available during tutorial?
2. Ask for help! Parents, siblings, friends *OR* stay after school for homework help.
3. Feel uncomfortable talking to your teacher...no one to help you study?
SEE YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR!

Your High School Transcript...

It may seem far away, but graduation is closer than you think. The work you do now will follow you through to graduation. Don't give a college or technical school a reason to second-guess your acceptance because of poor grades or numerous absences. Admissions counselors look at everything – DO YOUR BEST!

Join clubs and/or sports...

Not only do they “look good” on a college application, but participation is an excellent way to make new friends and become more involved in your school community. North East High School offers a wide variety of after school clubs, activities, and sports – GET INVOLVED!!

REMEMBER – Your school counselor is available to meet with you for a variety of reasons - personal, social and academic! If you need to talk stop in and make an appointment. ☺



Test Preparation

If you haven't been doing well on tests or you are worried about a test, ask your teacher for help. Most teachers are more than willing to help students. Always take advantage of free help! Check to see if your teacher is available during tutorial or attend an after school Homework Help session.



Before you meet with your teacher, be sure to:

- Look over your notes, worksheets, etc.
- Circle, star, mark, or highlight anything that you don't understand.
- Get any missing notes from another student

While meeting with your teacher, be sure to:

- Ask questions on anything that you don't understand.
- Ask your teacher for sample questions to see if you know the information.
- Tell your teachers about any problems that you are having on tests or with studying. Ask for any tips he/she might have to offer you.
- If you have difficulty finishing or reading tests, let your teacher know.

Don't miss the test! If you must miss a test, make it up as quickly as possible. It is your responsibility to arrange to make up a test. You cannot afford to take a zero. Missing just one test can change your grade drastically.

Test Preparation Form

Subject: _____

Test Date: _____

1. What kind of test will this be? (Check all which apply)

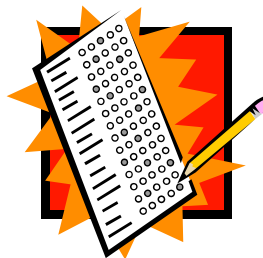
- _____ TRUE & FALSE
- _____ Multiple Choice
- _____ Matching
- _____ Sentence Completion/Fill in the Blank
- _____ Short Answer or Essay
- _____ Open Book/Notes

2. What information and/or chapters will be covered on the test?

3. How much time will we have to take the test?

4. What should I study? (Check all which apply)

- _____ Notes
- _____ Worksheets
- _____ Homework
- _____ Textbook
- _____ Videos
- _____ Handouts
- _____ Study Guide
- _____ Other



QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING YOUR VISIT

Before you decide to make your first visit, it's a good idea to think carefully about the kind of information you are going to need to eventually make a decision. The following are some good questions to get you started.

Ask The Recruiter:

1. What position (event) do you want me to play (perform), and how many others are you recruiting for the same position?
2. What is your philosophy of offense? Defense? Are you considering any changes?
3. Will I be red-shirted?
4. If I need a fifth year, will you finance it?
5. What happens to my scholarship if I am injured or ineligible?
6. Whom do I see if I have academic problems?
7. Has drug use been an issue at your school? Athletic program?
8. Are all injuries handled by a team insurance policy?
9. If injured, may I use my family doctor? Who determines my fitness to compete after an injury?
10. What is expected of players during the off-season?

Ask Of Athletes At The School

1. What does your typical daily schedule look like? In-season? Off-season?
2. Approximately how many hours a night do you study?
3. What generally are the attitudes of professors (different fields of study, in my field of study) towards athletes?
4. How do you like the living arrangements?
5. Do you have an academic advisor? Is he/she any good?
6. Are the coaches available to help if you have academic problems?

Ask Of Non-Athletes At The School

1. What do you think of the quality of the education you are receiving at this school?
2. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose this school to attend? Why or why not?
3. What is the general opinion of athletes on this campus?

Ask of School Officials/Admissions Officers

1. What are the different graduation rates for athletes? In my sport?
2. About how long does it take someone in my sport to earn a degree from this school?
3. What is the placement rate and the average starting salary for graduates in (your field of study)?
4. What is my eligibility for additional financial aid?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER THE VISIT

You will have to ask yourself several important questions after you have visited your schools in order to decide ultimately on the right school. These questions will provide a good start. Take the time to think about your answers, and be sure to talk to your counselor, and parents about answers that may be difficult for you. Remember, you want the right athletic and academic experience, so all these questions are important.

1. Did any of the recruiters have bad things to say about the other schools that are recruiting me?
2. Did any of the recruiters promise that I'd compete right away, even be a starter? (If they did, are you sure they were being honest?)
3. Would I attend this school if I had no intention of competing in my sport?
4. Do the coaches and player seem to care genuinely about each other?
5. Will I be successful academically in this school? Athletically? How do I measure up to everyone else?
6. Were the coaches and players I met honest, available to me and others, friendly, genuinely interested, or did they seem phony?
7. Were the coaches interested in academics? Did they ask me about my educational and career interests? Were they knowledgeable about my intended program of study? If not, did they introduce me to someone who might answer my questions?
8. Will I fit in with the rest of the student body at this particular school? Will I be comfortable associating with them for four or more years?
9. How will I feel if one or more of the coaches leaves? Will I still be happy with the school? My sports participation?
10. Does the school satisfy all the requirements that I identified earlier with my parents and counselor? *This probably is the most important question. Give it a lot of thought and be sure to talk it over with your counselor, and your parents.*

College Fairs

Attending a college fair is an easy way to gather loads of information from several different colleges, universities, trade schools, etc. Here are a few DO's and DONT's to help you maximize your time and stay focused.

Prior to the College Fair...

DO review websites/catalogs of schools you're interested in and write down questions that aren't answered in the materials. Be sure to ask these questions at the fair.

DO (if you have access to an agenda/list of attending colleges) review the list of colleges and information sessions at the fair and plan to visit the ones that interest you.

DO bring a pen and small notebook, your questions and a bag to hold all the college brochures/information you'll get, etc.

DO write down your most recent GPA, rank and PSAT or SAT/ACT scores in your notebook.

DO dress neatly, but also comfortably – dress in layers (it may get warm) and wear comfortable shoes.

At the College Fair...

DO assess the layout of the booths and make sure you walk past them in a logical order; otherwise you'll miss booths and waste time.

DON'T rush off after you visit a college's booth without jotting down what you've learned.

DO ask questions!!! If you just walk up, say hi, grab the free info and walk away you might as well have stayed home and researched schools on the internet! Here are a few generic, but useful questions to get the conversation started:

- I'm not familiar with your school...where are you located?
- About how far of a drive is your school from Erie?
- I'm interested in _____ (your intended major, a club, sport, activity) does your school offer this?
- About how much is tuition, room and board?

DO ask the representative attending the fair if he/she would be your contact person should you decide you would like more information...if they are, ask for their business card.

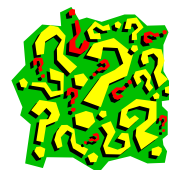
After the College Fair...

DON'T put the college materials in your closet -- keep them on hand for when you're ready to review them.

DO look through your materials, and your notes, within the week.

DO research colleges that interest you. Explore web sites, request more information from admissions offices and plan to visit.

DON'T keep everything. Weed out colleges/schools that aren't a good fit.



Junior Year

At this point in your high school career you should begin to think seriously about your future...two or four year college, work force, military, trade or technical school, etc.

If you're interested in enlisting in the military...(Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, National Guard, etc.)

- See your school counselor – recruiters frequently visit NEHS; we can schedule an appointment for you to meet with a recruiter to explore options, ask questions, etc.
- Sign up for the ASVAB – The ASVAB (Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery) can be taken at a recruiter's office or at NEHS.

If you're interested in joining the work force...

- Create a resume – your school counselor can help!
- Begin networking – let your family & friends know what type of job you're looking for and ask for help with job leads.

Points to Ponder – Where will you live? Do you have transportation? What about medical benefits? Will your salary cover your expenses? Will your employer pay for higher education down the road?

If you're interested in attending a 2-year or 4-year college, trade or technical school...

- Research your options... Location, Majors, Reputation, Financial Aid, Cost \$, Facilities, Size Admissions Requirements
- Begin planning college visits – It's never too early to start scouting out potential schools. Visit schools over Christmas, Easter, or summer break. If you can, spend a weekend on campus with a friend or relative.
- COMPETITIVENESS – It's time to take a serious look at your high school GPA and class rank. Use the *College Board College Handbook* or *Peterson's 4 Year Colleges* for college admissions information. Based on your research...Do you need to consider a few more "less competitive" schools? Or could you add a "more competitive" school to your list? *It's easy to say*, "I just love Carnegie Mellon – It's the only school I've ever wanted to attend!" *but difficult* to be granted admission. In 2004 only 38% of applicants were admitted to Carnegie Mellon: 95% had a GPA over 3.0, 72% ranked in the top 10% of their senior class, and approximately 99% had SAT math scores above 500! Researching schools is VERY IMPORTANT, based on the information you obtain you may want to apply to a wide variety of schools:

A "reach" school = qualifications discrepancy...I may not get accepted

A "good match" school = qualifications are close/exact...I should get accepted

A "safe" school = qualifications exact/surpass...I will get accepted

Don't put all of your **eggs** in one basket (i.e. reach schools).
You may find yourself **scrambling** for a school in the spring!



- SAT's – Register to take the SAT's during the spring of your junior year and the fall of your senior year (recommendation). Something to think about...not all trade, technical, and two-year schools require the SAT!

Keep your options open! With the cost of higher education skyrocketing research is critical!!!!!!

- Not all careers require a four-year degree.
- Not all four-year degrees lead to the career of your choice – you may need to attend graduate school.
- Starting out at a community college can save you big \$.
- Will taking a "year off" really allow you to explore your options? What are you planning to do?
- Look into apprentice programs – earn while you learn!
- Will today's "hot career" be as hot when you're ready to apply for a job – research projected growth! A great source for this information is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm

Military Overview

What is the military? In simple terms, the U.S. Armed Forces are made up of the five armed service branches: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy.

There are three general categories of military people: active duty (full-time soldiers and sailors), reserve & guard forces (usually work a civilian job, but can be called to full-time military duty), and veterans and retirees (past members of the military). And of course there are the millions of family members and friends of military members, past and present. But you're here to learn more about the military. There is much to learn! So, first the basics. Exactly who is in charge?



The President is the Commander in Chief, who is responsible for all final decisions. The Secretary of the Department of Defense (DoD) has control over the military and each branch - except the Coast Guard, which is under the Dept. of Homeland Security. With over 2 million civilian and military employees, the DoD is the world's largest "company."

Each branch of the military has a unique mission within the overall mission of U.S. security and peace. Here they are in a nutshell:

Air Force and Air Force Reserve: The nation's source of air and space power. The primary mission of the USAF is to fly planes, helicopters, and satellites.



Air National Guard: The Air National Guard as we know it today is a separate reserve component of the United States Air Force.

Army and Army Reserve: The dominant land power. The Army generally moves in to an area, secures it, and instills order and values before it leaves. It also guards U.S. installations and properties throughout the world.



Army National Guard: The Army National Guard is an elite group of warriors who dedicate a portion of their time to serving their nation. Each state has its own Guard, as required by the Constitution; in fact, it is the only branch of the military whose existence is actually required by the Constitution.

Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve: The Coast Guard's mission is primarily with domestic waterways. The Coast Guard does rescues, law enforcement, drug prevention, and clears waterways.



Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve: The Marine Corps is known as the U.S.' rapid-reaction force. They are trained to fight by sea and land, and usually are the first "boots on the ground." Marines are known as the world's fiercest warriors.



Navy and Navy Reserve: The Navy accomplishes its missions primarily by sea, but also by air and land. It secures and protects the oceans around the world to create peace and stability, making the seas safe for travel and trade.

Where are the legions? The U.S. operates in over 100 countries, including the U.K., Germany, Italy, Bahrain, Brazil, South Korea, Australia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Japan.



The ASVAB Explained

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is the most widely used multiple-aptitude test battery in the world. As an aptitude test, the ASVAB measures your strengths, weaknesses, and potential for future success. The ASVAB also provides you with career information for various civilian and military occupations and is an indicator for success in future endeavors whether you choose to go to college, vocational school, or a military career.

Your ASVAB Score can be Critical

ASVAB test scores are broken down by the individual sub-tests and composites of the sub-tests. One of the most critical of these scores is the Armed Forces Qualification Test, which is used to determine if you are qualified to join the military service. Each service determines the qualification AFQT score for enlisting in their service.

The AFQT is comprised of your test results in Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Math Knowledge (MK), and Verbal Composite (VE) x 2. Your Verbal Composite score is a combination of your Word Knowledge and Paragraph Comprehension scores.

Check out the following AFQT qualifying scores for each branch of service.

Service Branch	Required AFQT Score*
Army	31
Navy	35
Marines	32
Air Force	36
Coast Guard	36

**These scores are subject to change without notice.*

In addition, your scores on the other ASVAB composite tests will determine your career field or military occupation eligibility. Since enlistment bonuses are directly tied to your choice of occupations, the better the score, the more opportunities you have. But keep in mind, it is impossible to “ace” the

ASVAB, so your goal should be to simply do your best.

TIP: Be sure you are ready before you take the ASVAB — use the [Military.com ASVAB practice tests](#) to find the areas you may need to work on. In addition you can read about [ASVAB study techniques](#).

Three Versions of the ASVAB

There are three distinctly different versions or formats of the ASVAB; the **CAT-ASVAB** (computer adaptive test), the **MET-site ASVAB**, and the **Student ASVAB**. Each ASVAB has different benefits and limitations. Many potential military recruits take the CAT-ASVAB.

Next Step

Learn more about the [three versions of ASVAB](#).

College Countdown

September

- Register to take or re-take the SAT or ACT.
- Begin to narrow your college choices. If you're still deciding...meet with admissions representatives who visit NEHS, attend a college fair, or a fall open house, etc.
- Collect college applications. Make a list of deadlines for college applications & financial aid forms.
- Set academic goals. While a college may make an admissions decision before first marking period grades are posted don't think for one moment that they don't care about your senior year grades.
Schools will ask for mid-year and final grades.

October

- Visit any of your college choices that you haven't seen already.
- Take care of college application basics...prepare your essay, contact teachers or employers for letters of recommendation (give advanced notice).
- Find out which financial aid forms your college choices require and when the forms are due.
- Have your heart set on a particular school...why wait? Complete your application by Halloween!
- Begin to investigate available scholarships.

November

- Look out for November deadlines!!!
- The early bird gets the worm. Try your best to submit your applications no later than Thanksgiving.
- Review your academic goals...are you keeping your grades up?

December

- Procrastinators...submit your applications!!!
- Obtain a copy of the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA). Call 1-800-4-FED-AID or apply on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov

Parents - It's helpful to get your income tax returns prepared early. Your student's FAFSA can be submitted any time after January 1st.

January

- Submit your **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA) after January 1st. Remember to print or make copies of whatever you submit.
- Continue to investigate available scholarships on-line, in the guidance office, etc.

February

- Mail your FAFSA, if you haven't done so already.

March

- If you mailed your FAFSA in January or early February you should receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) noting financial aid eligibility.
- Keep searching for scholarships.
- The fourth marking period is here!!! You have one last shot at finishing this year on a positive note. Keep your grades up!!!

April

- Look for admissions notices in the mail!
- Carefully review financial aid award packages. Consider the tuition vs. your financial aid award. *Can you afford to attend?*
- Make a list of deadlines for your chosen school...housing, financial aid, etc.

May

- Decide where you're going to attend and submit necessary deposits, etc. Notify all other schools of your decision.
- Notify the guidance office of acceptances, scholarships received, etc. We need to know where you're going in order to mail a final transcript.

June

- Earning money at a summer job is crucial! Tuition and books aren't the only fees you'll encounter. Transportation, food, dorm room supplies, laundry, etc....It all adds up! Even if you plan to live at home...gas, lunch on campus, etc. The more you earn over the summer the better.

Important Q &A

To better understand your goals, needs, abilities, and habits complete the following questionnaire. The more you understand about who you are the better you will be able to find a perfect college match.

WHAT AM I REALLY INTERESTED IN?

Favorite Courses:

Favorite Activities:

Hobbies:

Majors That Interest Me:

Athletics:

Would I be satisfied playing on an intramural or club team?

HOW PREPARED AM I REALLY?

My GPA: My Class Rank:

My SAT/PSAT/ACT scores:

AP or honors courses I've taken:

HOW INDEPENDENT AM I?

How close am I to my family and friends?

Do I work better on my own or with help?

What's the longest I've ever been away from home?

Did I enjoy it?

How often would I like to see my family during the school year?

WHAT IS MY LEARNING STYLE?

Do I often participate in class?

Am I most productive with lots of students around or in smaller groups?

Do I feel more comfortable in the city, in the country, or somewhere in between?

WHAT ARE MY EXPECTATIONS?

What part of high school might I like to see repeated at college?

How do I hope college is different?

How many schools should I apply to?

It is recommended that students apply to anywhere from three to five colleges. Please don't put all of your eggs in one basket! In other words do not apply to all "reach" schools. Apply to a wide variety of schools. If not, you may find yourself searching for a school to accept you in the spring.

- A "reach" school – *I may not be accepted.*
 - Two or three "good match" schools – *I should be accepted.*
 - A "safe" school – *I will be accepted. There are very few "safe schools"...conduct research and apply on time!*
- Applying to colleges can be expensive. Conduct research and narrow your choices before applying!

Where can I get an application to the colleges of my choice?

- The Web Guidance Office College Representatives

How do I obtain the best letters of recommendation?

- Ask a teacher who can give a fair and accurate picture of you.
- It's best to ask a teacher from the high school; one that you have had for at least a full school year.
- It's a nice idea to put your request in writing – name of school(s) you are applying to, when the letter is needed, etc. *Please give advance notice.*
- A teacher may ask you to complete a "blue form" or an "All About Me" form (available in guidance)...Don't fret...having personal/background data will help a teacher write a better, more in depth letter about you! *Recommendations are confidential! Teachers may choose to show it to you, but they don't have to.*

How important are Essays? VERY

- Your essay should be carefully thought out and carefully written.
- A successful essay makes YOU memorable; therefore, try to avoid common themes: big loss in the playoffs, person you admire most, etc.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Running your essay through a spell checker is not enough – PROOFREAD!
- Essay optional? Use your judgment – but don't always take the easy way out!

What do I do once my application is complete?

Bring your completed application packet to the guidance secretary along with an envelope and the application fee. Sign your name and list the school(s) you are applying to in the College Binder. The guidance secretary will add your transcript and a copy of our school profile to the packet. Your guidance counselor will then review your application and if necessary add a recommendation. College applications must be mailed from the counseling office.

What steps should I take if I am applying on-line?

- Please print any sections of the application your counselor needs to complete.
- Sign your name in the College Binder - *we still need to mail out your transcript, school profile, etc.*

What else should I keep in mind?

- Your application should be spotless – no spelling errors, food stains, or severely wrinkled edges.
- Pay attention to detail - fill in every blank and proofread.
- Don't squeeze information into a small space -- write, "see attached sheet" and continue writing on a clean sheet of paper.
- Be aware of deadlines! For best results have your applications finished before Thanksgiving break – earlier if the school has rolling admissions.
- Do not include information that is not requested. I.e., essay, videotape, portfolio, etc.
- Complete your application on your own...it's usually pretty easy to tell if mom or dad fills them out for you!

***Questions? Still wondering what to do? Need financial aid info?
See your counselor!***



Why go to College?

Why go to college? It's a question that's easily overlooked in the rush to start the college application process and find the perfect school. Even if you've already decided college is the path for you, you could probably use some reassurance that you'll have more to show at the end of your college career than a framed diploma. So here's a quick look at just a few of the things you can expect to get from a college education.

Career Path

The majority of students go to college to prepare for their future career. And the great thing about college is you can sample and explore potential careers before you dive into one. Think you want to major in business? Take a few introductory classes in accounting and marketing, and you'll figure out pretty quickly if the business school is right for you. Likewise, that psychology elective you took on a whim might spark an entirely new area of interest, taking you down a career path you never imagined.

Earning Potential

Sure, there are successful people out there who make a great living without a college degree. But on average, college graduates earn nearly twice as much annually as those who don't continue their education beyond high school, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Factor those earnings over a lifetime, and those with a bachelor's degree will make \$1 million more than non-college graduates.

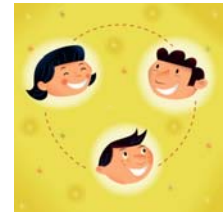


Self-Reliance

Think of college as a stepping stone to the real world. Coping with roommates, living on your own, setting your own schedule, even doing your own laundry — these are all things that help prepare you for adulthood within the relatively forgiving environment of a college campus.

Connections

As a college graduate, you'll be part of an alumni network that can help you make connections both professionally and socially. Yes, the name on your diploma just might score you a job interview with a fellow alum.



Lifelong Friends

Many people consider their college years some of the best in their life, and continue the friendships they made on campus well into adulthood. It makes sense — college is a time for figuring out who you are and who you want to be, and the people you meet along the way are an important part of that experience.

Personal Growth

College is about more than spending time in the classroom working toward your diploma. Along the way, you'll be meeting new people, having new experiences and developing new interests that give you a broader perspective on the world around you. No matter what your major is, you'll leave college as a well-rounded individual who is better prepared to handle whatever life has in store for you.



Advice for First Generation College Applicants



The prospect of applying to colleges can be pretty intimidating for any student. But if you're the first person in your family to attend college, your pride and excitement about heading off to school might be mixed with a good bit of anxiety. After all, unlike students who have college-educated parents or siblings, you don't have the first-hand experience of your family to help ease your mind about the entire process of getting ready for and applying to college. But just because you're less familiar with the process doesn't mean your college search shouldn't go as smoothly as anyone else's. Here are a few key pieces of advice to help you out along the way.

Start Early. Without the knowledge of their family to draw from, first-generation students simply have more of a learning curve when it comes to planning for college. So start thinking about college early on in high school to make sure you're on track when it comes to taking the right classes and getting involved in extracurricular activities.



Meet With Your High School Counselor. First-generation students and their families usually aren't as familiar with the ins and outs of actually applying to colleges. Your guidance counselor can help you along the way and make sure you hit important milestones and deadlines such as taking the SAT or ACT and applying for financial aid.

When Possible, Visit Campuses. Unlike students who may have visited the alma maters of their parents or siblings, first-generation students usually haven't spent much time on college campuses. And while glossy college brochures and in-depth Web sites can paint a pretty good picture, nothing beats visiting the real thing. Many students say a visit to campus is the pivotal moment when choosing a college. Make sure you visit a variety of campuses to get an idea of what feels right to you — big or small, public or private, far from home or local.



Involve Your Family. They might not know any more about getting into college than you do, but your family is still an important part of the college search process. And once you arrive on campus, they'll be an important source of support as you adjust to the challenges of college life. So ask your family to get involved in your college search, whether it's visiting campuses with you, helping fill out financial aid paperwork or giving your application one last proofreading. The more involved they are, the more they'll feel a part of your decision — and the more supportive they'll be in the long run.

Don't Sell Yourself Short. Many colleges and states offer merit aid programs for first generation students. You could get thousands of dollars in financial aid just by being a first generation student. So don't think that any college is out of reach. To get financial aid you'll need to fill out the FAFSA, Free Application for Federal Student Aid. For info on that form, visit www.fafsa.ed.gov.



Remember That College is New for Every Freshman. One of the most important things you can keep in mind as a first-generation student is that college is a brand new experience for every freshman. Once you arrive on campus, the playing field levels — everyone is in the same boat as they adjust to a new environment, new schedule, new friends and a new way of life. And really, that's what the college experience is all about.

<http://www.cappex.com/resources/preparingForCollege/whyGoToCollege.jsp>

Going the Distance: How Far Should You Go For College?



College itself is a journey. But just how far should you travel — literally — to get there? According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, 86 percent of students attending a four-year college choose a school within 500 miles of their home, while 53 percent go to a school within 100 miles of home. So near or far — what's right for you? Before you decide, think realistically about how distance from home can impact your college experience.

Admissions -- You might have slightly better odds of being accepted at a public college close to home, since these schools typically give priority to state residents. But don't feel limited by your out-of-state status if you want to look elsewhere. Most colleges, both public and private, want a geographically diverse student body, and therefore welcome — and even seek out — applicants from all 50 states.

Tuition Costs -- Staying inside state lines is one way to make college more affordable, as long as you choose a public school where tuition is usually much lower for in-state students. Plus, many states have financial aid programs just for residents. That said private schools across the country offer merit aid that can help make tuition every bit as affordable as an in-state public school. Likewise, merit aid and other scholarships at public universities can help offset the extra cost of out-of-state tuition.



Travel Expenses -- The farther away from home you attend college, the more it will cost to travel home for holidays, semester breaks or a quick visit with mom and dad when you get homesick. Consider how often you'll want to travel to and from school, and take that into account when you are figuring out the financial end of your college education.

Independence -- College will probably be your first real taste of independent living. For some students, being far from home only adds to that newfound sense of freedom. Completely new surroundings with few familiar faces inspire them to rely on themselves. On the other hand, some students prefer to test the waters of self-reliance at a school closer to home, where the support of family and friends is nearby if they need it.



Familiarity -- There's no doubt the transition from high school to college is a huge lifestyle adjustment. If you attend a far-away college, you'll also be adjusting to entirely new surroundings. The weather, regional mannerisms, even the local stores could be different. Many students thrive in a new environment and consider the opportunity to broaden their perspective on the world an important part of their college experience. But plenty of others find that staying put in the same geographic area adds a certain comfort level to the already unfamiliar surroundings of a college campus.

While you should weigh all the factors and think about whether you'd be happiest close to home or far away, the most important thing you can do in your college search is be open to all your options. You never know — the perfect college for you might just be across town ... or across the country!

<http://www.cappex.com/resources/preparingForCollege/whyGoToCollege.jsp>

Community College or Four-Year College: What's Right For You?

A traditional four-year college certainly isn't for everyone. In fact, plenty of students — four out of every 10 first-time freshmen, according to the American Association of Community Colleges — instead attend a two-year community college. Think a community college might be a good choice for you? Here's some information to help you decide.

What Is a Community College? Community colleges are typically two-year institutions that offer the benefits of low tuition and convenient locations. Students usually choose a community college with one of the following goals in mind:

- To begin earning basic credits that they will later transfer to a four-year college.
- To pursue a two-year associate's degree or certificate program to prepare for a specific career.
- To take continuing education classes in order to build new job skills, explore a new career or pursue a personal interest.

When Should You Consider A Community College? A community college offers plenty of benefits, but it might be a particularly good option for you if one of the following is true:

- **Cost is an issue.** Tuition at most community colleges is quite a bit cheaper than at their four-year counterparts. Even if you plan to eventually attend a four-year school, you can save big bucks by taking a couple of semesters of general prerequisites at a community college.
- **Your grades don't make the grade.** Unlike competitive four-year colleges, community colleges typically have open admissions policies which only require a high school diploma. Plus, attending a community college is a great way to improve your academic track record in order to get accepted at a four-year college.
- **You want job-specific training.** At a community college, you can usually dive right into a two-year program that will give you specific training for a specialized field or a technical or vocational career.
- **You're not quite ready to leave the nest.** Plenty of high school grads just aren't ready for the responsibility of living on their own. Community colleges are a good stepping stone, since you can ease into college courses while still living at home.
- **You need a flexible schedule.** If you need to balance a work schedule or family obligations with school, community colleges offer a lot of flexibility with day, evening or weekend classes, part-time schedules and online courses.

Drawbacks of Community College -- Of course, there are tradeoffs to attending a community college. Here are some key differences between community colleges and four-year schools.

- **Choice of Majors and Classes.** While course catalogs at community colleges can be extensive, they can't compare to the number of majors and classes you'll have to choose from at a four-year college.
- **Academic Regimen.** Community colleges, by design, serve a broad-based student body. In order to accommodate the varied backgrounds and abilities of students, classes might move at a slower pace than at a four-year school.
- **Collegiate Experience.** From dorm-living and hanging out on the quad, to school spirit and homecoming celebrations, four-year colleges give you the camaraderie of being in a university setting and a traditional collegiate experience that you just won't find at a community college.

The bottom line is that community colleges and traditional, four-year colleges both offer great educational opportunities. And like every other choice you'll make in your college search, deciding what's best for you boils down to weighing your educational goals, your personal circumstances and what you want most from your college experience.

College Admissions

Anyone can apply to college (all it takes is a completed application and a check for the application fee); however, being accepted is an entirely different story. Unfortunately, it's impossible to know exactly what a college/university is looking for. Basic information regarding entry requirements and admissions policies are available in school publications and on the web, but it's important to note that just as each person is unique, each year of college admissions brings its own uniqueness...*college acceptance is difficult to predict*. Recently, *Careers & Colleges* sent a reporter to four schools to speak to the gatekeepers themselves in order to give you an idea of what goes on behind the closed door of a college admissions office ...the responses are as follows:

What do you look for first in a candidate?

- Academic record - the level of courses, grades, grade patterns, and how they compare to others in their high school based on grade point average (GPA) and class rank.
- Strength in the academic curriculum – the kinds of classes a student has taken. GPA and test scores are important – statistically it still holds true that GPA and SAT/ACT scores together are a good predictor of first year academic success.
- We look at the high school that the student is coming from, how they challenged themselves from within that curriculum, and how they succeeded within that challenge.
- Admissions go beyond GPA. We look for those who will contribute to our environment – we look at the whole package...where the student comes from, what that student has done with the opportunities available, his/her intellectual curiosity, and overall preparation.

How important are activities outside of the classroom?

- Activities and talents are what give a student substance...but they will never substitute for academic achievement.
- As a private religious school we look for volunteering and good works -- community involvement and a commitment to service learning.
- We want to see involvement in clubs and activities and whether or not the student is involved in community work or if they hold a part-time job.
- We like to see an engagement with the community...members of a community committee, president of a church group, part-time job, etc.

Can a student overdo listing extracurricular activities?

- Often students think colleges want to see a lot of activities – sports, music or community service. Students shouldn't get involved because it will *look good* on the application, but because *involvement brings meaning* to their lives...that's what is important.
- We often think a laundry list of activities doesn't show much depth of experience. Instead of being involved in every school group, be heavily involved in a couple of organizations.

How does a student's geographic and ethnic background factor into admissions?

- Colleges all look to enroll a diverse class; therefore, all types of background information – ethnic, geographic, male/female, and economic are reviewed.
- At the heart of a liberal education is the free exchange of ideas, and you need to interact with others who are not necessarily from the same background as you so you learn from them, as well as teach them about your background.
- We look at ethnic background, geographic location, urban/rural, socio-economic background, international experience, and first-generation college. Our hope is to be close to a 50/50 gender mix – that lends to diversity as well.

How should an applicant use the essay?

- It's important to highlight achievements in the essay. A student needs to write something that is going to stand out. *College admissions counselors read hundreds of essays!*
- Use your own voice – don't plagiarize.

Final words on college admissions...

- ...don't do anything beyond what is asked of you when completing your application, i.e. sending a video tape, picture of yourself, etc.
- ...be realistic about the schools applicant pool. If a school is way out of reach (GPA, rank, SAT/ACT scores) you are just throwing your application fee away.
- ...a major pet peeve of one admissions counselor is seeing an application completed by mom or dad; this shows lack of interest in the process.
- ...make sure your essay addresses the provided topic --don't just send your most recent English paper.

To read the entire article, **Admission Confidential** by Don Rauf (*Careers & Colleges* September/October 2004) see Mrs. Panek in the guidance office.

Selectivity

Most of the nation's colleges and universities turn down some applicants every year. Some colleges, known as open-admissions schools, take anyone who applies until they run out of space. Others accept any student who meets a threshold formula, one that usually involves some combination of high school grades, SAT/ACT scores and class rank. Several hundred colleges accept fewer than 90% of their applicants each year – these choosy schools are sometimes known as very selective or Ivy League schools. The selectivity of these schools can be difficult for some students and parents to grasp. One might think that the valedictorian of their high school class (number one student in his/her class) wouldn't have the slightest problem getting into say Harvard, but when you think about the number of valedictorians in Pennsylvania – over 500, and the number of valedictorians nation wide (several thousand) and compare that with the number of students who are accepted to Harvard each year...it becomes apparent that YES, Harvard, and lots of other very selective schools deny admission to valedictorians each year!!!

So, just exactly how are these super students selected? Well, it really comes down to splitting hairs...an extra AP course...a unique talent...an outstanding letter of recommendation...any one of these could be what gives you the extra edge.

If you are interested in a highly selective school, there are several things to consider. First and foremost...there is no way to predict who will be accepted. *THERE IS NO FORMULA*. All you can do is send your application on its way and hope for the best...but before you do keep the following in mind:

- Check the average ranges of the schools SAT's...are you being realistic?
- Make sure you know which tests are required...SAT/ACT.
- Be mindful that regardless of your SAT's, it is very important to be in the top 10% of your class.
- Your application must be perfect – no mistakes, spelling errors and it must be on time.
- Carefully consider the teachers that you ask to write your letters of recommendation. Pick a teacher who not only knows you well, but one who can write impressive things about you.
- Take care of interview arrangements ASAP!
- Decide if you are going to apply Early Action, Early Decision or Regular Decision....make sure your counselor knows you are applying!
- As you fill in blanks and write essays keep in mind that you are marketing yourself – make yourself shine!
- Don't put all of your eggs in one basket – apply to less selective schools as well.

ALSO...Applying to colleges can be very expensive. Applying to Harvard just so you can “see what happens” or to frame the rejection letter will cost you \$90. Be realistic and research a schools admissions criterion before you apply. ☺

10 Steps to Successful College Selection

1. *Determine the type of college you want to attend:* Small, large, private, public, commuter, residential, technical, liberal arts, 2 year, 4 year, etc. Think about the environment and class size which you are most comfortable.
2. *Decide how far from home you are willing to travel:* Do you plan on going home on a regular basis or only once or twice per year? Can you afford to fly to and from the college? How do mom/dad feel about driving 3, 4, 6 hours one way to pick you up? Is being in a warm climate as important as attending the best college for your academic interests?
3. *Have an honest discussion with your parents:* Are your expectations and theirs the same? How much money will they be able to contribute to your education? Will they be visiting colleges with you? Are they willing to help you fill out financial aid documents?
4. *Consider your academic and extracurricular interests:* Do you know what major you wish to study? (Many students do not – so don't panic.) Is it important to you to play a specific sport, be involved in a theatre group, write for a college newspaper, etc? Make a list of areas of interest that are important to you.
5. *Research, research, research:* Attend college fairs, do internet and college catalog research, talk to friends, alumni, counselors, neighbors, etc. Develop a list of colleges that meet your criteria. Narrow that list to 4 to 7 colleges.
6. *Request additional information on your short list of colleges:* Request catalogs, look at web sites, collect applications and financial aid brochures, etc. Review admission criteria, program availability, support services, extracurricular activities and identify colleges to visit and/or to submit applications.
7. *Schedule college visits and interviews:* Several weeks in advance contact colleges to make appointments to visit or attend an open house program. Schedule a tour and visit with all appropriate offices, i.e. admissions, financial aid, coaches, academic departments, etc. Confirm your appointment prior to your visit.
8. *Be prepared for your interview:* Learn all that you can about the college and create a list of questions to ask interviewers. Take an unofficial transcript, list of your clubs, activities, sports and test scores with you to the interview to help determine your eligibility. Dress appropriately, be on time, get the name, address and phone number of those you meet with so you can write thank you notes. Make notes about what you liked and didn't like about the visit and college. Be sure to tour the local community as well as the campus.
9. *Complete admissions applications and financial aid/scholarship forms by required deadlines:* It is essential that you identify application deadlines and meet them. The earlier you apply for admission and financial aid the better. Remember that your guidance office personnel are very busy and may need a few days to complete your application before it is mailed. Do not submit applications the day they are due.
10. *Assess your admissions offers and select the college you will attend:* Evaluate your admission offers, financial aid packages and how well each college meets the criteria you have established. Contact colleges to ask any unanswered questions. Identify the institution you plan to attend and make the appropriate deposits by the required deadline.