

Demystifying The College Admissions Process

Four Steps To Demystifying The College Admissions Process

(Adapted from Amanda Schmidt, University of Michigan Assistant Director of Admissions)

Step 1- Identify your reasons for going to college

- Opportunity to expand knowledge of self and the world around you
- Opportunity to meet new and different people
- Increase earning potential
- You take control of what you want to study- and begin learning about your future career
- You'll have opportunities to be a part of different organizations and activities

Where Should I go?

• Trade/Technical

– Focus on a specific skill or talent

• Two-Year Community/Junior Colleges

– Popular option for student unsure of area of study

– Often a smart financial option for these students

– Many students transfer into 4 year institutions

• Four-Year Colleges & Universities

– Typically have more available

– Research Opportunities are growing

– Some require living on-campus for 1st year

Where do you fit in?

- Large Public Universities
- Large Private Universities
- Medium to Small Public Colleges
- Medium to Small Private Colleges

How to find the right fit? VISIT!

- Visit every school you can
- Take a campus tour
- Take an unofficial transcript with you
- Schedule a meeting with an admissions counselor
- Meet with general departments
- Ask current students questions about the school
- Sit in on an academic class and eat in a residence hall

Other Types of Schools

- Religious Schools
- Historically Black Colleges & Universities
- Same Gender Schools
- Technical

What should I consider when choosing a college? What's Important to you?

- Academic Reputation and Programs
- Admissions requirements
- Selectivity
- Cost & Financial Aid
- Career Preparation & Opportunities
- Diversity/Student Profile
- Sophomore Retention Rates
- Campus Activities/Organizations
- Location
- Graduation Rates
- Size

How do I narrow my list of colleges?

- Research college websites
- Talk to High School Counselors & Teachers
- Attend College Presentations & Fairs
- Talk to admissions counselors, faculty, students, and alumni from a particular school
- Visit College Campuses
- Register for a tour and sit in classes
- Attend events (i.e. social, academic)

Sample Questions for Admissions Counselors

- What are your admissions requirements?
- How may I register for a campus tour?
- What are your retention and graduation rates?
- After I apply, when will I receive a decision?

Step 2: Follow a College Planning Timeline

Freshman Year

- Meet with high school counselor and select courses that meet college requirements
- Take challenging courses

Sophomore Year

- Research colleges and careers on the internet
- Utilize your summers

Junior Year

- Research admissions requirements
- Continue extra-curricular involvement -- seek leadership positions

Senior Year

- Fall-review admissions applications from your top schools
- Complete those applications by the deadline!

Step 3: The Admissions Process and Evaluation Measures

Types of Admissions Policies-Know your deadlines!

- Rolling
- Regular Notification
- Early Action
- Early Response
- Early Decision (You're obligated to attend & should only apply to one E.D. school)

Elements of An Application

- High School Transcript
- Curriculum (Your Senior Year schedule matters)
- Testing
- Extracurricular Activities
- Essay(s) and short answer responses
- High School Counselor & Teacher Recommendation

Standardized Tests

PSAT

- Pre-SAT score prediction and diagnostic information
- In Junior year, used for National Merit qualification

•ACT

- More curriculum/knowledge based than SAT
- For in-state and many Midwest publics - may be all that is required
- At some colleges also used as a placement exam
- Writing Test portion is optional, check college's requirements

•SAT

- More often required by selective privates
- Includes essay portion since March 2005
- Now on a 2400 point scale

•SAT Subject Tests (formally called SAT IIs)

- One-hour subject tests best taken as soon as you complete the appropriate course
- Only needed if applying to some selective schools

•Advanced Placement Exams

- Usually not "officially" considered in college admission process – but schools will see scores if you report them
- Used for credit by most (but not all) colleges and universities – often scores of 3-5, sometimes only 4-5. Visit this website to confirm required scores and college credit granted.

http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/0,1607,7-128-38193_38211_40324-136960--,00.html

Resume/Extracurricular Activities (Recorded in Career Cruising EDP)

- Keep track of activities and accomplishments from freshman until senior year
- Look for leadership & deeper service opportunities in junior & senior years
- Include competition/honors on regional & national level
- Work experience
- Commitment in activities
- The longer the list does not guarantee the better the list. Quality opposed to Quantity!

The Essays

- Answer the question!
- If you recycle your essays-have more than one person proofread it
- Plagiarism is unacceptable
- Essays are an opportunity to learn more about you--treat them as you would an admissions interview

Teacher & Counselor Recommendations

- Ask for recommendations at least a month before you need it
- Ask teachers in classes where you've been most active/interested
- Get to know your counselor-their input is critical
- Get recommendations from employers, organizations, etc
- Always send a thank you note

H.S. Counselors provide information about the educational environment:

- Strength of curriculum (availability of AP, IB, Honors)
- Average SAT I and/or ACT scores
- Percentage attending colleges
- Competitive grading system in high school
- Competitiveness of class
- Colleges and universities will consider other characteristics and attributes

Personal Background

- Alumni connection
- Cultural awareness/experiences
- First generation to go to college from family
- Low economic family background
- Personal disadvantage
- Professional diversity

Geographic Considerations

- In state resident
- From school with few or no previous applicants

Completing the Application Process

- Submit complete packet to high school counseling office
- Submit application online and request that transcripts & recommendations be sent to college/university
- Advantages of web applications
 - Clean, neat...no white out needed!
 - Ability to proof & correct
 - Speed of processing

Step 4: Making a Decision

- *Rejoice in acceptances
- Weigh financial aid/cost,
- Final visits
- Balance of challenge & support
- Reserve your space as a freshman by paying your enrollment deposit by school's deadline
- Notify all the schools that you have been accepted to of your decision
- *Accept disappointments and move on to Plan B

Financial Aid Basics

Four Types of Financial Aid

- Grants-\$ that doesn't have to be repaid
- Scholarships-\$ that doesn't have to be repaid
- Work Study-\$ that is earned and used to pay tuition
- Loans-\$ that has to be repaid

Start Now

- It's never too early to start saving for college
- Research and apply for Private Scholarships!
- Talk with your parents and local bank about smart ways to budget and save for college
- Many banks and credit unions have youth savings programs and seminars
- Research your top Colleges Financial Aid Process
 - Apply as early as possible for financial aid
- Schools have limited resources and once the money is gone---it's gone

Important Websites

- FAFSA www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov
Completed after January 1st of the senior year
- CSS PROFILE <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com>
Apply for non-federal student aid funds
- Scholarship information <http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid>