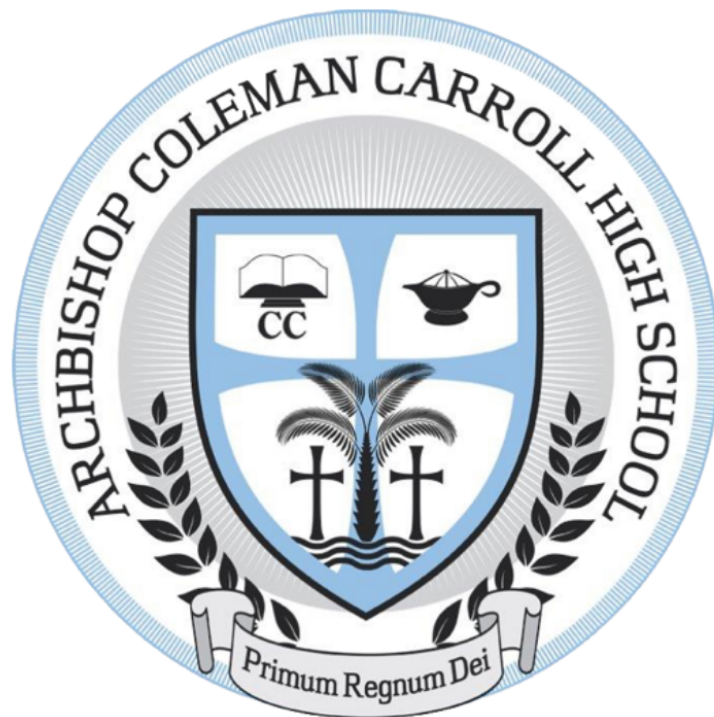


College Handbook



Updated By Ms. Garcia | June 2022

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WHAT DO COLLEGES LOOK AT?

The first component in the college admissions review process is the difficulty, or rigor, of the student's choices of course work. After reviewing the level of rigor in a student's courses, the admissions staff will consider the grade received in each course. The grade should be an indicator of how well a student understood the material and if they have fulfilled the entire course requirements including completion of all assignments.

Next, most colleges and universities will see how well students perform on standardized tests. Admission officers try to determine a student's readiness for college through the SAT which has 2 components: Critical Reading and Mathematics or the ACT which has 4 components: English, Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Science plus an optional essay. The ACT measures what a student has learned in school while the SAT is more of an aptitude test that tests reasoning and verbal abilities. Art schools, music schools, and music conservatories usually rely on portfolios and auditions to determine readiness, preparation, and potential.

Once an admissions office has gained a good understanding of the student applicant academically, its readers will turn to the student's extracurricular accomplishments. When reviewing this section of the application, they look for patterns that reveal the student's passions, commitment, and growing leadership and/or leadership potential. Consistency of choice and follow through shows where one's true abilities and commitments lie.

Consistency with extracurriculars also helps one build self-esteem and gain maturity through one's growing skills, knowledge, and continued efforts over time. Therefore, it is important to choose one's extracurriculars wisely and weed out activities that one really isn't that committed to or interested in beyond high school. Each choice, whether it is in sports, music, drama, clubs, service, or just the type of summer activities which one devotes ample time, talks more about who one is, what motivates that person, and what might be a good path of future study.

GENERAL ADMISSIONS CRITERIA INCLUDE:

- Grade point average (GPA)
- Strength of course selection and curriculum
- Standardized test scores such as SAT, ACT, AP, SAT Subject tests, etc.
- Extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, community service, etc.)
- Personal qualities, demographics, and special circumstances/accomplishments
- Teacher and counselor recommendations
- Personal statement/essays (if required)
- Interview, portfolios, and/or auditions (if required)

In order to create an optimal high school transcript, to prepare for standardized tests, and present an appropriately positive extracurricular resume, Carroll gives students tools that will allow them to open as many doors of opportunity as possible after graduation.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

PSAT – This exam is given to freshmen, sophomores and juniors in October during the school day at Carroll. The 9th and 10th grade administration are used exclusively for practice and course placement. The 11th grade results serve as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQT), which is owned and operated by the National Merit Foundation and co-owned by The College Board. Only the junior year score is used for National Merit consideration. Scores range from 20 - 80 in each of three sections. Semifinalists scores range annually but usually fall among the top 1% of test takers.

SAT -This exam focuses on writing, critical reading, and mathematical reasoning ability. Critical reading emphasizes reading and verbal skills. Math contains enhanced college-preparatory math (Algebra II). It is recommended that students take the SAT exam for the first time in the winter and/or spring of the junior year and again in October or November of the senior year. Ideally, for college admission, all testing should be finalized by the end of December in a senior year.

ACT - The ACT is another standardized college entrance test given several times a year. This curriculum-based test consists of four sections and measures achievement in: English usage, mathematics usage, reading comprehension, and science reasoning. There is also an optional 30-minute writing assessment. All Carroll students sit for this exam in March of their junior year.

AP - Advanced Placement - These three-hour examinations are based on a full-year college level course in high school. Scores range from 1-5. Most college and universities provide college credit for scores of a 3 or above. All students who take an AP class are required to sit for the AP exam.

Mastering the SAT and ACT - Differences and Similarities

Many students score similarly on the ACT and SAT. However, the tests do assess different information and problem-solving skills, so it's not unusual to do better on one exam than the other. Therefore, we recommend that students take each test at least once to determine which test works better for them. Key exam differences are outlined below.

1. Aptitude vs. Achievement

The SAT was designed as an aptitude test -- it tests your reasoning and verbal abilities, not what you've learned in school. In fact, the SAT was supposed to be a test that one could not study for -- studying does not change one's aptitude. The ACT, on the other hand, is an achievement test. It is meant to test what you have learned in school. However, this distinction between "aptitude" and "achievement" is dubious. There's concrete evidence showing that you can study for the SAT, and as the tests have evolved, they have come to look more and more like each other.

2. Test Length

The ACT has 215 questions plus the optional essay. The SAT has 154 questions. The actual testing time for the ACT is 2 hours and 55 minutes with an additional 40-minute optional essay while the SAT takes 3 hours (total test time is longer for both because of breaks).

3. Structural Differences

Students taking the SAT will find that the questions get more difficult as they progress. The ACT has a more constant level of difficulty. Also, the ACT math section is all multiple choice whereas the SAT math section has some questions that require written answers. Finally, the ACT optional essay is last.

4. Scoring Differences

The scoring scales for the two exams are quite different: the ACT ranges between 1 and 36 while the SAT ranges from 400 to 1600. One significant difference is that the ACT provides a composite score -- it shows how your combined scores measure up against other test takers. The SAT provides just individual scores for each section. For the ACT, colleges often place more weight on the composite score than individual scores. For both the SAT and ACT, there is no penalty for a wrong answer, so guessing is encouraged.

Preparing for the Test

Mastering the SAT and ACT involves some amount of preparation, as the test is likely to be substantially different from other tests you've encountered previously. Standardized test prep is available in many forms, ranging from free practice questions online to test-taking classes and private tutoring. Some standardized test prep can get extremely pricey, and the benefits of such services are far from concrete. Depending on what you want to accomplish with your scores, you may be best served by taking advantage of a variety of test prep options that do not involve expensive tutoring sessions.

The best advice for approaching the exams successfully is to go into the test with a clear sense of what to expect, both in terms of the test format and environment, and in terms of how well you need to do on the test. Start early reviewing and consider registering for a test date during your junior year, rather than one of the dates in the fall of your senior year. This will give you time to retake the test if you so desire and to readjust your strategy towards testing, college admissions, or scholarship applications if needed. Enrolling in challenging courses in high school and devoting more time to reading may also help boost your testing scores, especially in writing and reading, plus these are good practices anyway.

Taking and scoring practice tests online will also help you prepare, especially if you take care to simulate the test environment by timing yourself and taking the test on paper in a quiet space. High school juniors also may take the PSAT, which serves as practice and preparation for the SAT, as well as the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship, a popular nationwide scholarship award based on PSAT scores.

If you do not do well on the test your first time around, don't despair. You may take the test as often as you would like (keep in mind that the test is only offered 6 to 7 times per year). Schools will only receive the results you choose to send. Use this to your advantage.

The Test Day and After

In addition to practicing, you can make the most of your SAT/ACT test day by being sure to show up to the center well-rested, well-prepared, and preferably at least 15 minutes early to avoid rushing, panicking, and throwing off your rhythm for the whole day. If you're familiar with what to expect and you feel prepared for the test, the boost of confidence may also boost your score.

If you don't do well on the test, don't panic. If you know immediately that something went wrong and your test date was a train wreck (perhaps you fell asleep during the test or personal issues derailed your concentration completely), you can cancel your scores and forget that testing session ever happened. You won't get a refund, but at least you won't have low test scores reported to your top-choice college. The College Board has also rolled out a new service called Score Choice, letting you choose which scores will be reported to colleges and scholarship providers as part of the application process, rather than reporting every single score as they have in the past. However, Score Choice is limited by colleges' SAT score submission practices, and some schools will still require applicants to submit all their SAT scores.

If you've left yourself time to retake the test, you can take advantage of that popular option, spending more time on preparation and using your SAT score report as a study guide for the next test. Most colleges won't blink at receiving multiple sets of test scores, and they will use your highest scores from each section when considering you for admission and scholarships.

If you choose not to retake the SAT or ACT or you've taken the test multiple times without getting the score you want, remember that standardized test scores aren't everything. Colleges and scholarship providers are increasingly moving towards a holistic approach to assessing applications, meaning they're likely to give more weight to your strong grades and excellent record of community service and leadership, and less to your less-than-stellar test scores.

As a final note, some students who struggle with the SAT do better on the ACT and vice versa. If after all your efforts, you still aren't getting where you want on this test, you can always try the other. Nearly all colleges accept scores from either test for admissions, as well as for university scholarship awards.

THE COLLEGE SEARCH

"Fit" is a very important consideration in a student's college search. Finding colleges that are a good match for you based on your interests, abilities, values, aspirations, and preferences both social and academic. Therefore, the first step in developing a good college list is an honest self-assessment.

Here are some questions and other points you might ask yourself to help determine your priorities and selection criteria.

- What are your academic interests, as well as your strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you learn best, in large or small classes?
- Do you like to contribute to discussion or listen anonymously to lectures?
- What activities out of class matter most to you?
- Are you political, religious, artsy, preppy, or other kind of person?
- How important is the name and prestige of an institution?
- What type of social and cultural environment best suits you?
- Do you want diversity in your college or a more homogeneous campus?
- Where do you want to live for the next 4 or so years? (city, country, coast, Midwest, etc...)

The Student's College Search Criteria

- **Size:** Do I want the anonymity of a large school versus the personal attention from professors at a smaller school? Think about the learning environment in a lecture hall of 400, where you might be able to go through four years without being called on more than a few times; as opposed to the smaller class size, even seminar classes at small schools, where your participation is expected. It is much easier to have a big impact on life - and be involved - at a smaller school, since you will be better able to know the administration and many of the other campus leaders personally. At large schools, meetings will be announced, but unless you seek them out, clubs and organizations won't come to find you.
- **Weather:** Can I live through heat, wind, snow, rain, and sleet? We don't really have that in South Florida, so this is an important question if you are considering leaving the area or the state.
- **Location:** Have I visited a school in a suburban or rural area, so that I know what it means to distinguish between urban, suburban, or rural campuses?
- **Programs:** Am I looking for a specialized school? (Engineering, music, fashion design)
- **Co-Curricular Activities:** Do I want to attend a school with a strong sense of campus community? Big-time sports can make you feel like you belong the minute football season begins. Do you like the tradition that goes along with big-time sports programs? Or are you trying to find a school with an orchestra, an award-winning student newspaper, political demonstrations, or important guest speakers?
- **Academic Atmosphere:** What environment suits me? Tense or relaxed, competitive or geared to individual progress, high or low academic expectations, opportunities for recreational and cultural activities to supplement academics, honor systems and academic discipline codes.

- **Graduation Rates:** Is it important to you to graduate in four years? Be sure to find out how many students graduate in 4 years at the school you are considering. Additionally, check to see what percentage of students receive jobs upon graduating.
- **Social Structure and Campus Lifestyle:** Is a residential campus important? This is an especially important question for students planning to attend out-of-state colleges. Weekend social life, on and off campus, types of entertainment favored by the students, fraternities and sororities, and system of student rules are all important factors in the daily life of a student.
- **Your Own Priorities:** Think about the dozens of other things that you might consider; athletics, performing arts, distance from home or relatives, cost, public/private, religious affiliation, specific programs, and interdisciplinary majors. Size, location, and curriculum are all readily observable and easily described and compared. Far more difficult to assess and compare are the many factors that contribute to the feel of a campus, both academically and socially.

Therefore, if possible, a visit is recommended at some point before committing to attend a college. Once you have determined your priorities and search criteria there are many resources to help you find colleges and learn more about them. One of the most useful places to find good matches, based on your personal profile and criteria, is on the College Board website. Other websites such as Common App, US News, and GoToCollegeFairs offer college search engines and matchmaking services to help with these searches.

REASONS WHY YOU MIGHT CONSIDER AN HONORS PROGRAM

Smaller Classes

A community of like-minded students is just one of the reasons to consider an Honors College or Program. If you have the grades, a high SAT or ACT score and the motivation to work hard in your classes, it's no surprise that you're looking at honors colleges and programs at the schools you're considering. You might even consider specific honors programs such as Miami-Dade Honors.

Prepares You for Grad School

When you graduate from an Honors Program you might already have experience writing a thesis, presenting on a research topic and working closely with an adviser. Those aren't little projects, either. A thesis presentation is an hour and a half long. The paper is required to be at least 40 pages. The rigorous coursework can prepare you for graduate or professional degree programs.

Honors Students Get Perks

Priority registration is a big perk for honors students. "The minute registration opens, they get first crack at everything," Honors students are also considered for special scholarships, receive a notation on their transcripts and get to participate in day trips and other social activities. And the

special study abroad options? Honors students also have something to tell potential employers. It shows you were not the typical student; you went above and beyond.

Experience a Different Kind of Teaching

Lively classes and social activities are great reasons to join an honors program. But the biggest reason, is the support of a group of people who are highly interested in learning. Honors professors know they're teaching the college's top students, so their classes are often discussion based, seminar-style classes instead of lectures.

COLLEGE CAMPUS VISIT

Ideally, you should visit a college before attending. The visit allows you to get a personal view of the college rather than a biased view from view books, catalogs, videos, representatives, and others.

When: The best time is either during the summer or during Spring Break. Visiting during these times allows for a longer look at the various colleges and universities visited while not taking time off from school. In addition, the admissions officers have more time to spend with you. Check with each college for the best time of year. Check online and with the admissions office to schedule your visit. You may want to schedule a tour, personal interview (if possible), visit classes, stay in a dorm, or meet with students or specific members of the faculty.

Campus Visit Procedures: Call, e-mail, or write the college or university as far in advance as possible to schedule tours, dorm accommodations, and interviews, etc.

While on Campus:

- Assess the cleanliness, comfort, noise level, privacy, and safety of the dormitory. Is there a Laundromat in the dorm?
- Is the library accessible to you when you need it? Can you use other libraries in the area? Are the librarians helpful?
- Evaluate campus security. Do they have an escort service? The admissions office has statistics on campus crime.
- Evaluate the computers on campus. Are dorm rooms hooked up to the main system? Are college computers easily accessible? Can you purchase one at a discount?
- Evaluate the food and dining options.
- Are movie theaters, shopping, dining, etc. close to campus?
- Read the college newspaper, alumni magazine, and bulletin boards.
- Try to get a general impression of what the college and the students are like.
- Evaluate those areas which are important to you:
 - Athletic facilities
 - Campus theaters
 - Publication offices
 - Science and foreign language labs

- Extracurricular activity options
- Department of intended major
- Talk to Students:
 - What drew them to this college?
 - What do they like and dislike?
 - What is the academic load like?
 - How is the social life at the school?
 - How do they get along with faculty and administration?
- Observe:
 - Appearance of the students and faculty
 - Academic atmosphere
 - Friendliness of students and faculty
 - Ethnic diversity
 - School spirit
- Evaluate:
 - While on your visit, write down your impressions--good and bad. Be specific.
 - Would you be happy in this environment for the next four years?
 - Trust your instincts and first impressions.

TYPES OF ADMISSION

Early Decision (E.D.): This usually means you must apply in November, and the college will give you a decision by mid-December. As stated in the contract you will have signed, if admitted as an early decision applicant, you must attend that college, and you must withdraw all other applications. Some schools may have a Financial Aid exception that will allow you to withdraw. There is no room for doubt as it is a binding contract which may only be made with one college.

Early Action (E.A.): This refers to a non-binding early admission program. Students admitted under this program are not committed in any way, and may, if they wish, file admissions applications to other colleges. Colleges that have "**Single Choice Early Action**" (S.C.E.A.) programs do not allow candidates to apply to other schools during the early action period only. However, once they receive EA (Early Action) decisions (mid-December), then applicants are free to apply elsewhere, if they so choose.

You should be aware that if you file an application as an Early Decision or Early Action applicant to some schools and are denied admission, you may not apply again to the same school for the same admissions year as a regular admissions applicant. **READ EVERYTHING CAREFULLY!**

Rolling Admissions: With rolling admissions, the admission application is reviewed as soon as the file is complete. The college notifies the student of its decision within a short time, usually four to six weeks. Due to the increasing competitiveness of college admissions, it is a good idea to apply early to these colleges as spaces become limited as time goes on.

Open Admissions: Some colleges do not practice selective admissions and offer admission to all students who apply. Generally, there are no admission deadlines for colleges that follow this policy. The community/state colleges are an example of this type of admission.

THE COLLEGE ESSAY AND PERSONAL STATEMENT

Many selective colleges put a great deal of emphasis on the college essay or personal statement since so many of their classes requires a significant amount of writing. A well written essay can tip the admission decision in the applicant's favor; a poorly executed essay can do the reverse. For most seniors, the essay is truly the only part of the application process where they still can affect the admission outcome.

Basic Tips for the Essay Portion

- Answer the question asked entirely. Follow all directions as to the length and format of the essay. Check if there is a minimum or maximum word count.
- Instead of talking about an event, let it come across in your essay in a descriptive tone.
- Speak directly to the topic and make sure the essay is centered around you and your experience. This should be a story that only you can tell.
- Use the essay to help the admissions officer understand your character and background better.
- Use the "So What?" test. Read your essay as if you were the admissions officer. Would they finish your essay and say, "So What?" If so, you are not done editing.
- Focus on one event that has made a big impact on who you are.
- Use language and creative writing styles to elaborate your story and make it come alive.
- Do NOT use slang, write about a one-sided topic, be cynical, repeat what is in your application, or plagiarize the essay.
- Ask someone you trust to read your essay and see if the intended message came across. Consider a parent, teacher, counselor, or an older sibling.
- Proofread it yourself. The best trick is to read your essay out loud when proofreading.

FINANCIAL/MERIT AID

Who is most likely to get financial aid?

- Institutional Aid from the college or university you will be attending can be awarded to students with a "special talent the school is looking for in the incoming class.
- Students who fall in the top 25% of the incoming class or meet certain GPA and test score requirements
- College Board National Recognition Award Recipients or National Merit Finalists (based on PSAT/NMSQT scores)
- Students with superior athletic abilities in a specific sport
- Students whose family income is less than \$40,000 or that fall below a certain amount (can vary)

- Underrepresented students (African Americans, Hispanics, or Native Americans) who apply to schools where they will be at least in the middle academic range for that college.
- First Generation Students (parents did not receive and post-secondary education)
- Students with different learning abilities

This does not mean that you will not qualify if you do not meet the above criteria. To receive financial aid, you must apply for financial aid. Many colleges require that you apply even if you are interested only in a merit-based (versus need-based) scholarship or loan. To apply for financial aid, your parents will have to fill out one or more financial aid forms. You must meet each college's financial aid deadlines. Check with each college you are applying to for scholarship deadlines, that can be as early as October of your Senior year, that must be met to qualify.

There are three main financial aid forms:

The most important one is the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. It is best to fill out this form as soon as possible and it becomes available every year on October 1st of your senior year. The FAFSA form is available online at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

The FAFSA is automatically reviewed for:

- **Federal Pell Grants:** Generally, Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students who show exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. The maximum amount of the award is \$6,895 per year and do not need to be repaid.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG):** A FSEOG is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need and gives priority to students who receive Federal Pell Grants. The FSEOG does not have to be paid back. The maximum amount varies between \$100 and \$4,00 a year and is administered directly by each participating school. This makes it important to apply early.
- **Federal Work-Study:** The Federal Work-Study Program provides jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money at a campus job to help pay education expenses. The total Federal Work-Study award depends on when you apply, your level of need, and the funding level of your school.
- **Direct Subsidized Loan:** Subsidized loans are awarded to eligible undergraduate students based on need, and interest does not accrue until after you have completed your studies.
- **Direct Unsubsidized Loans:** Unsubsidized loans are not based on needs and start accruing interest during your studies. There are available to eligible undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

- **Direct PLUS Loan:** These are loans made available to graduate or professional students and to parents of dependent undergraduate students to cover educational expenses not covered by other financial aid.

Once you have filed your FAFSA form, it will be processed, and a **Student Aid Report (SAR)** will be emailed to you with your **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**. If there are corrections to be made, make them at once and resubmit the form as instructed. Remember that accurate figures from completed income tax returns are necessary.

The second financial aid form students will complete is **The Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)**. This application is used to evaluate students for the state's Bright Futures Scholarship Program and, in conjunction with the FAFSA, eligibility for need-based grants from Florida such as the Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG) and the Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG).

The third form you might be asked to fill out is the **CSS Profile**. This is a financial aid form used in addition to the FAFSA by some private colleges. If the school you are applying to is listed on the CSS Profile registration form, then you must fill it out. Go to www.collegeboard.com to complete your personalized Profile application. The site opens October 1st. It is not free, so be sure to fill out the registration form and send in the correct payment well in advance of January 1st. The fee can be waived based upon the applicant's answers to some of the need-based questions on the application. Individual forms customized for each college will be sent to you so that you can file them during the same time period as the FAFSA.

Scholarships

Most large scholarship awards come from the college or university's institutional funds and students are automatically considered for these awards based upon their GPA and test scores once their application is submitted... ANOTHER REALLY IMPORTANT REASON TO GET THOSE APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSIONS DONE EARLY AND ON TIME! However, there are thousands of outside scholarships that range from very small amounts (\$25) to very substantial (\$10,000+). Most of these scholarship applications will ask for an essay or additional documents to qualify. Carroll counselors send out many scholarships via email and Monthly/Quarterly Newsletters.

Here are some additional ideas for researching scholarships:

- If your parents work for a large company, be sure they check with their Human Resources office to see if scholarships are offered to children of employees
- If you belong to an ethnic group with an active club, they may offer scholarships
- Local chapters of civic organizations such as the Omega Nu, Rotary, Eagles, Elks, etc., all offer some type of scholarship. Call the local offices and ask.
- Watch for announcements and advertisements in the local newspaper. Many organizations decide to offer a scholarship and simply tell the local press.
- Whatever you do, stay away from the scholarship scam artists. If you are not sure if a scholarship is legitimate, ask your counselor.

- Check websites such as fastweb.com, scholarships.com, and scholarshipguidance.com which are scholarship search engines
- Enroll in micro-scholarship sites such as Raise.Me that award money for the everyday accomplishments you already do in high school

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

First and foremost, remember the mantra, "start early" and "stay organized." Use the Carroll Application Checklist to keep track of the different tasks you need to do as you begin applying to colleges. In addition, there is a list of steps you can begin as early as junior year listed below. By acting early to set up the framework for the application process, Carroll's goal is to have every college-bound senior ready to submit their college applications in November, especially for those planning to apply early decision or early action. Early submission almost always works to one's advantage, especially for colleges and universities with rolling admission.

Things to remember:

- Keep close track of all deadlines:
 - create a calendar or spreadsheet with tasks and deadlines and check off as you go
- Be sure to spell your name the same way on all application materials, SAT/ACT registration, and any correspondence to colleges. If you use a middle name or initial, use it every time on every form. Colleges might set up different files for a student if they use different variations.
- Keep a copy of everything you send in, including online applications, essays, and other written and email correspondence.
- Send in all documents before the deadline to avoid close calls and not rush applications.

Set Up or Choose a College Admissions Email Account

Set up an email account to use SPECIFICALLY for college admissions ... AND CHECK IT REGULARLY! This can be one you already have or a new one you create. Avoid usernames that an admissions officer might find silly, inappropriate or immature.

Track Your Accounts and Passwords

Set up a separate college notebook or use a mobile app to track all your user accounts, passwords, and other information needed for your applications.

Review Your Online Persona

Review your content on all social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, and more. Consider updating or deleting content that might not be viewed favorably by college admissions officers. More and more admission officers are checking out applicants' social media sites and could negatively affect your admission.

Test Preparation

Register and prepare for the ACT and SAT. At ACC, all freshmen, sophomores, and juniors take the PSAT in October. Juniors take an ACT exam in March. Once you have seen your results determine if you need to improve your scores by studying over the summer. If you decide to

retake an exam senior year, it is a good idea to register as soon as possible for a test date in October or November as, ideally, all standardized testing for college admissions should be completed by December of your senior year.

Register for the Common Application in August

900+ colleges and universities accept the Common Application. If any of the schools you are considering use the Common Application, set up an account in August of your senior year. Write down your username and password. Download the appropriate forms, including short answer and essay topics. After you register, you can complete the application at your own pace, revising and saving your work as you progress. Please note, some state schools still have their own online application found their college's homepage under admissions. There you will find all the requirements and criteria for admissions to their college or university.

Request Recommendation Letters

Many schools require or suggest counselor and/or teacher recommendation letters. Your college advisor will most likely complete the counselor recommendation form for you. If a teacher recommendation letter is required, make sure to choose someone you have a good relationship with and that has taught you during the last 2 years of high school. It is also a good rule of thumb to try to find a teacher in the area of study you are apply to or that is an alumnus of that college or university. College and universities usually ask for 2 letters if they ask for any at all. Please make sure to complete a counselor/teacher brag sheet or submit resume along with a personal email early in your senior year to avoid delays in sending your recommendations. Allow a minimum of 2 weeks for letters to be written. You can find the brag sheet online in the Common App Ready Toolkit.

Request Transcripts on Time

Requests for Official Transcripts must be done via Parchment and there is a \$12 charge per Official Transcript, unless it is to be uploaded to Common App which is a one-time fee of \$30. Please allow up to 3 business days for Official Transcripts to be mailed. Unofficial transcripts needed to assist with applications are free of charge to Seniors and can usually be printed at time of request. Unofficial transcripts that require submission are \$5 and can be ordered in the guidance office.

Personal Statement

The primary essay in the Common Application is called the personal statement. You'll need to choose among seven topics. Your essay should be between 250 and 1000 words. Most counselors recommend 500 words. Your college advisor provides your English teacher with tips and tricks to help you with this process.

Research and Visit Colleges

If you are still working on your list of colleges, make sure you have good resources to narrow your choices. Attend local college night programs and College Fairs, visit schools in person and online, and research the websites of each school to find out more information.

READY, SET, GO!!!!

- Review your college list to make sure it includes a balanced mix of Safety, Match, and Reach Schools (we suggest a minimum five schools in total with the majority being Match)
 - Safety: You fall in the top 25% of the GPA and Test Scores of the last incoming class and have about an 80% chance of acceptance
 - Match: These are schools that you are a perfect fit for, and your scores match those of the current freshmen
 - Reach: These are usually dream schools with 20-30% acceptance rates that are just harder in general to get in to
- Confirm with your counselor that you are on track to meet all graduation requirements.
- Make sure that all required documents are complete and submitted.
- Follow-up with your College Advisor in person or via email to keep your college application process moving forward efficiently and to give updates on any changes to your college list, awards and accomplishments.

Complete Your Applications, Supply Related Information, and Follow-up

Carefully review and proofread application materials before submitting. For colleges that require an interview, schedule it well before the deadline. Follow up to be sure that all portions of the application have been received: transcripts, standardized test scores, application, essay, letters of recommendation, art portfolios, etc. Many colleges have an "application status" function on their portals and will alert students if parts of the application file are missing. If they send you instructions to set up an account, do so immediately and record your username and password. Check your status periodically to make sure all application materials have been received. Remember the turnaround time can be up to 6 weeks for processing.

Dual Enrollment

You must request official transcripts from St. Thomas University or Miami-Dade College if you completed any dual enrollment courses with them. This is your responsibility.

Test Scores

Send ACT/SAT scores to colleges on your final list. Send and store your AP Scores in a college folder for college registration. Send ACT/SAT scores well before the application deadline to avoid a late fee. Most registrations come with 4 free reports to send out, but they must be used within a certain time frame. If not, they can be sent for a nominal cost. This is your responsibility to submit scores, not the school registrar's or counselor's.

Research and Apply for Financial Aid & Scholarships

Keep a timeline with scholarship deadlines and specific requirements. Collect financial-aid information and learn about the FAFSA and CSS Profile. Complete the FAFSA and CSS Profile (Private School Financial Aid Form), as appropriate. The CSS Profile can usually be submitted as early as September (with estimated income tax information) while the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) becomes available on October 1st.

DECISIONS AND FOLLOW-UP STEPS

The time has come for you to make some important decisions and to finalize some important steps of your next journey. First and foremost, read all documents you receive thoroughly from each college, while paying close attention to the next steps you need to take and about each deadline.

Admitted Student Day - Many schools hold an "Admitted Student Day" so that you can visit the school with other students before you make your final decision by May 1. If this is the case, make sure to talk to students and teachers at the institution that share your interests and teach the subjects you will be taking. Try to get an insider's view of what it would really be like to attend.

The Financial Aid Letter - Read through each financial aid letter carefully. You will want to compare financial aid offers. Your award letter will outline the various types of financial aid you have been offered. Each will be unique to that institute and should include such things as student and parent loans, grants, scholarships (or extra scholarship application information), work study, etc. If you have been admitted to more than one college, your final choice may come down to the financial aid offer. Inquire if the awards are renewable and not just a one-time incentive to get you to enroll. Remember, you do not have to accept every part of the financial aid offer. You may want to accept the grants, scholarships, work study and student subsidized loans and not the student and parent unsubsidized loans. Find out the terms of the loans, the interest rate, when you must start repayments, how much you will owe by graduation, the monthly repayments, and how much the loan will increase after your first year. If you are awarded grants or scholarships, find out what happens if you win an outside scholarship, and what stipulations such as minimum GPA may apply. If you are offered work-study, ask if a job is "guaranteed", how jobs are assigned or found on the campus, how many hours you can work, what your hourly wage will be, and how you will be paid (paycheck, student account, etc.).

Waitlisted - If you are wait-listed by your first-choice school and decide to accept the waitlist offer, you must also accept a spot at one of the schools where you were admitted often with a deposit, a small price to pay for a big peace of mind! When accepting the waitlist offer, let the admissions office know immediately in writing. Include any achievements or new information that wasn't on your initial application in this letter/email. Emphasize your strong desire to attend the college and make a case for why it's a good fit both ways. Request another interview if possible and finish high school strong by staying involved in sports, clubs, and other activities as well as your academics. If you do eventually get offered a spot off the waitlist, let the other school know you want to withdraw your acceptance. You will forfeit the small deposit at that school, but the guaranteed spot is well worth the money.

What If You Don't Get in Anywhere - This might happen... and sometimes a closed door can lead you down a better path. Sometimes when students only apply to extremely selective schools, they find that they must redirect their search or consider some alternative paths or options. Initially, ask the college for an explanation for the denial, especially if you have met all the admission criteria. If an appeal is warranted, because of an error on their part, find out the

college's procedures and make the appeal. If an appeal is a long shot, talk to your counselor about other good fit schools whose deadlines haven't yet passed. Some schools are on a rolling basis and may still have spots available for freshmen applicants. Use the College Search option on College Board to find schools that are still accepting applications. There are other options you should consider. This is the main reason why it is important for students to be realistic in their college choices and have plan B and C in the event it is necessary to go that route. You don't want to find yourself in March, April or even May with nowhere to go and having to start again.

Community/State Colleges and Honors Programs - Consider attending a Florida Community or State College. Most State Colleges offer Transfer Agreement Guarantee (TAG) opportunities as well as Honor Transfer Programs that may have agreements with some very selective schools. The Honors College at Miami Dade College has agreements with over 64 such schools!!

Decision Made, Now What? - Once you have made your decision as to which college and financial aid offer to accept, you must complete, sign, and return the form with a deposit by the deadline. Don't miss the date as this could lead to losing your spot or a penalty fee. Most deadlines are May 1st but note carefully the reply date in your acceptance letter. Many schools will allow you to make the deposit online. Be sure to call the school if you have any questions. In addition, please remember to send an email to all the other colleges that admitted you so they can open your place to another candidate who really wants to attend that school. Example:

Dear (name on your admittance letter),
I am writing to let you know that I must decline your offer of admittance. I have decided to attend (name of college you have accepted) instead. Thank you for admitting me. It was a true honor.

Sincerely, (Your Name

The next step is to take care of any loan paperwork. If you accept student loans as part of your financial aid package, you will need to fill out the loan application forms before the start of the semester. Make sure you understand your rights and obligations as a borrower. Contact the financial aid office of the institution right away if your family's financial status changes due to the loss of a job, displacement, illness, etc.

THE DETAILS OF THE DECISIONS HOUSING, MEAL PLANS, ORIENTATION & REGISTRATION

Housing - Where you will live is a major consideration. If you are going to live on campus you will receive a housing packet. Pay close attention to the instructions and deadline for the deposit. The packet includes information about the different dorm options; location, special-interest or "theme" housing, roommate questionnaire, room options (singles, doubles, suites), resident rules, a list of items to buy for your room, and much more. Once you have been given the name and contact information of your roommate(s), make contact. It is a good idea to share expenses.

You can also research off-campus options that can be more affordable at times. Most college towns have individual lease options and student-housing available.

Tip: For your second year, consider applying for a job as a Resident Advisor (RA) position to pay for your housing if you wish to stay on campus.

Select a Meal Plan - Most colleges offer a choice of different meal plans. Typically, they are based on how many meals per week you will eat on campus. Find out the different options and if you can speak to some experienced college students about the best plan at the school. Keep in mind that if you plan to join Greek life some organization may include meals in their dues.

Orientation & Registration - Bring copies of any AP Exams and Dual Enrollment credits you have taken for placement purposes and exemption from certain placement exams. AP Grade Reports are sent in July to the college or university you designated on your answer sheet, to you, and to your high school. Each report is cumulative and includes grades for all the AP Exams you have ever taken, unless you have requested that one or more grades be withheld from a college or canceled. Some reports take longer to process because of problems with identification information or the late arrival of materials from the testing location. Contact AP Services if you have not received a grade report by September 1st.

Give Thanks Where Thanks Are Due - Don't forget to thank all those who helped you during the college application process such as your teachers, counselors, coaches, scholarship sponsors, and especially your parents.

Last but not least...

- Complete your Exit Survey and submit your final transcript request to your college advisor.
- Schedule a physical exam plus any necessary vaccinations required over the summer.
- Sign up for a pre-orientation program if your college offers one. These tend to be Outward Bound Type trips designed to form new relationships outside the classroom.
- If you go to a state college or university, they may offer several orientation days so sign up as soon as you know your availability. This should be a priority over vacation and travel.
- Set up a bank account with your parents, if you do not already have one. Make sure a branch is available near the school you will be attending.
- Find out if you will need to take any placement exams for Math, English or Foreign Language and when they are being held. Many colleges will exempt you if you have scored in a certain range on a SAT or AP exam.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Many students with learning differences have received accommodations during high school. They might be tempted to "go it alone" in college, but there are dangers to doing so. First, it is important to make sure that accommodations are approved and in place, even if the student does not take advantage of them. Once the school term begins, there is very little time before midterms and major papers are due. Should the student discover that help would be needed;

accommodations cannot begin immediately upon request. It can be a long period of time - a semester or a full academic year - before all paperwork and evaluations are in place. A second reason you do not want to avoid utilizing assistance in college is that students will be missing one of the most important lessons college has to offer: how to find and use help. This step toward becoming an independent learner is crucial to success, and students with learning differences would be well advised to get all the assistance available at the beginning of the college experience. No college has the right to ask an applicant if they have a disability. However, there may be very good reasons to self-disclose, such as:

- Grades in classes such as math or English were consistently lower than other classes.
- The disability was identified at a certain point in high school and grades improved dramatically once the student began receiving accommodations.
- The student was unable to pursue a high level of study in a certain subject, such as foreign language, due to the disability.

There are three categories of assistance provided by colleges:

- **Structured Programs:** Colleges with structured programs offer specific programs for students with LD/ADHD that go well beyond mandated services. These services might include special admissions procedures, specialized and trained professionals, compensatory strategies, one-on-one tutoring, additional fees, compulsory participation, and monitoring.
- **Coordinated Services:** Colleges with coordinated services offer programs for students with LD/ADHD that might be somewhat involved with the admissions decisions and might include voluntary participation, services beyond those that are mandated, low or no fees, and less structure.
- **Basic Services:** Colleges with basic services comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but rarely have specialized LD staff, do not have monitoring, and are totally dependent on student advocacy. The student with LD/ADHD must take these steps when applying to college in order to be eligible for services:
 - Self-disclose the LD or ADHD
 - Request accommodations
 - Submit current and appropriate documentation

The college will then exercise their right to independently examine the documentation and identify the services they feel are reasonable and appropriate.

LIST OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN FLORIDA

The following is a list of colleges and universities in the State of Florida.

Public Colleges and Universities

State University System

| | |
|--|--|
| Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (Tallahassee) | New College of Florida (Sarasota) |
| Florida Atlantic University (Boca Raton) | University of Central Florida (Orlando) |
| Florida Gulf Coast University (Ft. Myers) | University of Florida (Gainesville) |
| Florida International University (Miami) | University of North Florida (Jacksonville) |
| Florida State University (Tallahassee) | University of South Florida (Tampa) |
| | University of West Florida (Pensacola) |

Florida College System

| | |
|---|--|
| Brevard Community College (Cocoa) | Palm Beach State College (Lake Worth) |
| Broward College (Davie) | Pasco-Hernando Community College (New Port Richey) |
| Chipola College (Marianna) | Pensacola State College (Pensacola) |
| College of Central Florida (Ocala) | Polk State College (Winter Haven) |
| Daytona State College (Daytona Beach) | Santa Fe College (Gainesville) |
| Edison State College (Fort Myers) | Seminole State College of Florida (Sanford) |
| Florida Gateway College (Lake City) | South Florida Community College (Avon Park) |
| Florida Keys Community College (Key West) | St. Johns River State College (Palatka) |
| Florida State College (Jacksonville) | St. Petersburg College (St. Petersburg) |
| Gulf Coast State College (Panama City) | State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (Bradenton) |
| Hillsborough Community College (Tampa) | Tallahassee Community College (Tallahassee) |
| Indian River State College (Ft. Pierce) | Valencia College (Orlando) |
| Lake-Sumter Community College (Leesburg) | |
| Miami Dade College (Miami) | |
| North Florida Community College (Madison) | |
| Northwest Florida State College (Niceville) | |

Private Colleges and Universities

Religiously Affiliated Institutions

| | |
|---|--|
| Ave Maria University (Ave Maria) | Florida Memorial University (Miami Gardens) |
| Baptist College of Florida (Graceville) | Florida Southern College (Lakeland) |
| Barry University (Miami Shores) | Hobe Sound Bible College (Hobe Sound) |
| Clearwater Christian College (Clearwater) | Hindu University of America (Orlando) |
| Eckerd College (St. Petersburg) | Miami Christian University (Miami) |
| Florida Christian College (Kissimmee) | Palm Beach Atlantic University (West Palm Beach) |
| Florida Christian University (Orlando) | Pensacola Christian College (Pensacola) |
| Florida College (Temple Terrace) | |

Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando)
Saint John Vianney College Seminary
(Miami)
Saint Leo University (St. Leo)
Smith Christian University (Plantation)
St. Thomas University (Miami Gardens)
South Florida Bible College and Theological
Seminary (Deerfield Beach)

Trade/Technical Institutions

Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale (Fort
Lauderdale)
College of Business & Technology (Miami)
Digital Media Arts College (Boca Raton)
Everest University (Pompano Beach)
Everglades University (Boca Raton)
Florida Career College (Miami)
Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences
(Orlando)
Florida Technical College (Jacksonville)
Full Sail University (Winter Park)
Hodges University (Naples)
Keiser Career College (Greenacres)

Other Private Institutions

Atlantis University (Miami-Dade County)
Beacon College (Leesburg)
Bethune-Cookman University (Daytona
Beach)
Carlos Albizu University (Miami)
DeVry University (Orlando)
Edward Waters College (Jacksonville)
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
(Daytona Beach)
Flagler College (St. Augustine)
Florida Institute of Technology (Melbourne)
International Fine Arts College (Miami)
Jacksonville University (Jacksonville)
Johnson & Wales University (North Miami)
Jones College (Jacksonville)

Southeastern University (Lakeland)
Tabernacle Bible College and Seminary
(Tampa)
Touro College South (Miami Beach)
Trinity College (Temple Terrace)
Warner University (Lake Wales)
University of Port Lauderdale (Lauderhill)

Keiser University (Fort Lauderdale)
Miami International University of Art &
Design (Miami)
Orlando Culinary Academy (Orlando)
Prince of Prestige Academy - School of
Digital Motion Picture Production (Maitland)
Ringling College of Art and Design (Sarasota)
Springfield College School of Human
Services (Tampa)
The Digital Animation and Visual Effects
School (Orlando)
Webber International University (Babson
Park)

Lynn University (Boca Raton)
Northwood University (West Palm Beach)
Nova Southeastern University (Davie)
Rasmussen College (Holiday)
Rasmussen College (Ocala)
Rasmussen College (Fort Myers)
Rollins College (Winter Park)
Schiller International University (Largo)
Stetson University (Deland)
Technological University of America (Ft
Lauderdale)
University of Miami (Coral Gables)
University of Phoenix (Orlando)
University of Tampa (Tampa)

RESOURCES FOR COLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS

College Planning Tools

- <http://www.collegeboard.org/>
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/your-college-application/get-organized/college-application-checklist>
- <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/students-and-parents/college-planning-resources.html>

Financial Aid Tools

- <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> - Complete the FAFSA
- <http://studentaid.ed.gov/> - Federal Student Aid Site
- <http://www.finaid.org/> - Student aid resource site
- <http://www.ed.gov/> - U.S. Department of Education
- <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPHome/SAPHome?url=home> – Bright futures and Florida Financial Aid Application
- <http://www.finaid.org/calculators/> - Financial Aid Calculator

Personality and Career Assessment

- <http://www.princetonreview.com/careers-after-college.aspx> - The Princeton Review Career Test
- <http://www.jobtrainingclasses.net/> - Vocational Programs available through Miami Dade County Publics School's Adult Education Program
- <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test> - Free Personality Assessment

Search for Colleges

- <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> - National Center for Education Statistics
- <http://www.petersons.com/> -Test Prep, College and Scholarship Search
- <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-search> - Princeton Review College Search
- <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/college-search> US News College Search

College Rankings

- <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges> - US News & World Report

Testing

- <http://www.sat.org/> – the SAT test and other resources
- <http://www.act.org/> - the ACT test and other resources
- <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/standardizedtests/tp/sat-act.htm> - Comparison between SAT & ACT for college admissions

Test Prep Resources

- <http://www.princetonreview.com/> – Test Prep and college search tools
- <http://www.testprepreview.com/> - a wide array of free practice tests
- <http://www.vocabulary.com/> - fun ways to improve your vocabulary

Military Careers

- <http://www.todaymilitary.com/> - Military (general)
- <http://www.army.mil/> - Army
- <http://www.navy.mil/> - Navy
- <http://www.uscg.mil/> - Coast Guard
- <http://www.marines.com/> - Marines
- <http://www.af.mil/> - Air Force
- <https://www.spaceforce.com/> - Space Force

Virtual Tours

- <https://www.thecolletour.com/> - College Tour TV Series
- <http://www.ecampustours.com/>
- <http://www.campustours.com/>

Scholarship Search

- <http://www.scholarship.com/>
- <http://www.fastweb.com/>
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/scholarship-search>
- <https://scholarshipguidance.com/>
- <http://www.wiredscholar.com/> - Student Loan Search

For Minority, Low-Income, First-Generation Students

- <http://www.thehundred-seven.org/hbculist.html> - Historically Black Colleges
- <https://www.hsf.net/> - Hispanic Scholarship Fund
- <http://www.uncf.org/> - United Negro College Fund
- <http://www.aihec.org/> - American Indian Higher Education Consortium
- <http://www.hillel.org/> - Jewish college resources
- <http://www.gmsp.org/> - Gates Millennium Scholars
- <https://www.thegatesscholarship.org/scholarship> - The Gates Scholarship
- <http://www.hacu.net/> - Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
- <http://www.jbhe.com/> - Journal of Blacks in Higher Education
- <http://www.gem.org/> - Quality Education for Minorities

Students with Disabilities

- <http://www.ahead.org/> - Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
- <http://www.chadd.org/> - Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders
- <http://www.nclد.org/> - National Center for Learning Disabilities
- <http://www.fcsn.org/> - Federation for Children with Special Needs
- <https://educationusa.state.gov/resources-students-disabilities> - Education USA