

# ULTIMATE COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

For High School District 211 Students and their Parents





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# WHY COLLEGE?

Can you find work with a high school diploma? Most likely, yes. However, the type of work you can do may be limited, and the occupations a high school education qualifies you for may not provide opportunities for advancement and/or increased income.

Whether you are interested in business, science, the Arts, technical training or specialized instruction, a college degree can be an important entry point for pursuing a career.

The college experience is designed to help you make the transition from living at home to making your own way in the world. The path is not without potential pitfalls, but these are part of a life lesson that incorporates academics, social skills and a growing sense of independence.

# MONEY AND NETWORKING

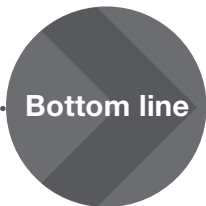
## MONEY

Going to college qualifies you for higher-paying jobs in most fields. In general, college graduates make a lot more money than those with only a high school diploma.

Check out the numbers on average yearly salary by educational level\*:

- No high school diploma: \$25,376
- High school graduate: \$34,736
- Associate degree: \$41,184
- Bachelor's degree: \$57,252
- Advanced degree holders: \$68,952-\$82,732

Do the math: Based on these numbers, over the course of a 40-year career, a high school diploma will net you \$1,389,440. That might not sound bad until you realize that a bachelor's degree will get you \$2,290,080 over the same period.



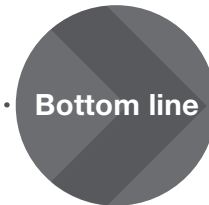
**Bottom line**

You can earn almost a million dollars more over the course of your lifetime with a bachelor's degree vs. a high school diploma.

## NETWORKING

Never underestimate the power of meeting new people. More than 50 percent of people are hired because of a personal connection, such as a friend, family member, neighbor, acquaintance, teacher or former coworker. Eighty percent of available jobs are never even advertised.\*\*

Going to college exponentially expands your social circles. Every semester you encounter new classmates and professors who share similar interests (or who can introduce you to others) and can open doors to job opportunities. These connections extend far beyond college graduation, providing years of future support to help you explore your options, achieve your goals and develop a successful career.



**Bottom line**

The people you know are some of the most effective resources for your job search.

(\*Data for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers. Source: [http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_chart\\_001.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm))

(\*\*<http://www.labor.state.ny.us/careerservices/findajob/conduct.shtml>)

# COLLEGE MYTHS DEBUNKED

There are practically oceans of information out there about college: on the Internet, from your high school counselor, in your mailbox, from your friends and family, on billboards, in your email, etc. Some of the information is good; some of it is simply not true. Here are some common college myths in circulation—and the reality behind them:

**MYTH:** I'm better off going directly to a four-year college or university.

**REALITY:** There are definite advantages to starting at a community college:

- **Save money:** By attending a community college for your first two years, you can save up to \$60,000 or more on your bachelor's degree
- **Build your resumé:** Instead of just getting a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution, starting at a community college can also provide you with certifications and/or an associate degree as you work toward your bachelor's degree. These additional credentials can help you stand out from other applicants when you start looking for a job.
- **Explore your options:** Because of the lower tuition rate, taking classes at a community college provides you with an affordable way to try a variety of different classes before you decide on your major

**MYTH:** I can't afford college.

**REALITY:** There are many resources for financial assistance, including scholarships, grants and loans. For example, over 9,000 students were awarded nearly \$23 million in scholarships, grants and tuition waivers through Harper College in 2015-2016.

**MYTH:** I did fine in high school, so I'm sure I'll do fine in college.

**REALITY:** College is more difficult than high school. That doesn't mean you can't do it, but you need to go into the experience with reasonable expectations of the increased workload.

Most colleges offer tutoring centers and other resources to help students make a successful transition. Many colleges—Harper included—offer special classes such as First-Year Seminar to incoming freshman to help them develop the skills they need to succeed in a college environment.

**MYTH:** I want to get good grades and raise my GPA, so I'm just going to take easy classes in high school.

**REALITY:** Getting good grades in easy classes does not help you prepare for college. The more you challenge yourself in high school by taking tougher college-prep classes, the better your chances of success in college. Consider taking summer classes at a local community college ([harpercollege.edu/summer](http://harpercollege.edu/summer)) to earn college credit and prepare for the academic experience. You should also ask your high school counselor about "dual credit" classes and other options that allow you to earn college credit for classes taken during your junior and senior years of high school.



**MYTH:** College admissions aren't affected by classes or grades during my senior year of high school. Time to relax!

.....

**REALITY:** The classes you take in your senior year can be very important in preparing you for college work. Every year, colleges retract offers of admission, put students on academic probation or alter financial aid packages as a result of "senioritis."

**MYTH:** High school grades only count from sophomore year onwards.

.....

**REALITY:** Your cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is made up of all your classes from freshman year through senior year. Let's put this in perspective. Say your GPA for freshman year of high school was 2.0, and you want to go to NIU. According to the profile of admitted NIU students as found on [www.niu.edu](http://www.niu.edu), you would need a GPA of at least 2.85. To raise your freshman 2.0 GPA to a 2.85, you would need to score higher than a 3.0 for your sophomore, junior AND senior years in high school. You're better off starting off strong than spending your entire high school years trying to catch up.

**MYTH:** I can't wait to go to college so I can take whatever courses I want.

.....

**REALITY:** Every student is required to complete a core set of classes known as general education requirements. These classes are an important component of your education because they help you become more broadly educated, which is important in our rapidly changing global community. However, you do have the opportunity to choose and change your major area of study.

**MYTH:** I don't know what major to choose. Maybe I should wait to start college until I know what I want to study.

.....

**REALITY:** You have plenty of time to choose a major, both before and after you enroll in college. In fact, declaring your major early limits one of the opportunities college offers: to experiment and explore different fields and perhaps discover ones you haven't even heard of yet.

For most degrees, you don't have to choose a major until the end of your sophomore year. Until then, you can take courses in a variety of fields. You'll earn general education credits that count toward your degree, no matter what you major in. As you take different classes, you'll probably find a subject area you will enjoy studying.

On the other hand, some majors, especially in career-oriented fields like engineering and design, require courses that have to be taken in order. Starting one of those majors after your freshman year can mean that it takes you longer to complete your degree. However, you can often begin taking classes in the field before you formally declare it as your major.


**MYTH:** I'll apply for financial aid after I get accepted to college.

.....

**REALITY:** High school students need to file a federal aid form (FAFSA) before a college sends out an acceptance letter. This also applies to applicants to a community college.

October 1 is the first day you can file the FAFSA. You should try to file as close to this date as possible. Be sure to pay attention to colleges' priority financial aid deadlines, which may differ from state or federal deadlines.

The free application for federal student aid can be found online at: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>



HOW DO I  
PREPARE FOR  
COLLEGE?



# FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Now is the time to begin searching for a college where you will want to spend at least the next two to four years of your life. You can find a variety of resources through your high school guidance counselor and online.

As you search for your school you should keep the following factors in mind:

## **MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION FOR YOU.**

Everyone is different. Just because one of your friends is going to a particular university or “everyone” is going to a popular college doesn’t mean that school is the right place for you. Remember to take the time to consider places that may not be the right choice for “everyone,” but might be the “right” choice for you.

## **VISIT COLLEGES.**

It’s a good idea to visit several college campuses. It’s an even better idea to visit very different ones (e.g., one small, liberal arts college; one large, four-year state school; one two-year community college, etc.). It will help you figure out exactly what you want from your college experience and help you think of questions you may not have thought of previously. When you schedule your visit, try to do so when school is in session and ask about the possibility of sitting in on a class. If applicable, look into an overnight stay in the dorms with a host student for a real taste of what it would be like to live and study at that college.

Harper offers high school students and their parents the opportunity to meet with a recruitment specialist to discuss their educational path or take a tour. If you are interested in scheduling a college visit at Harper, please call 847.925.6707.

## **HOW DOES THE CURRICULUM FIT WITH YOUR POSSIBLE CAREER CHOICE?**

Some colleges are known for being particularly strong in certain areas of study. These may be in liberal arts such as English, communications and the Arts, or they may be in more specialized areas such as science, law or medicine. Although it is possible that you may change your mind about your major after you have entered college, you should certainly look at institutions that offer programs in the areas in which you are most interested.

## **CONSIDER THE OPTION OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE.**

A two-year community college such as Harper can be an excellent way to make the transition from high school to college. A two-year institution offers small class sizes, personalized attention and the option to live at home. Many two-year colleges also offer career education in specific fields such as health care, electronics, manufacturing, engineering or law enforcement that give you the education you need to start working right after graduating with an associate degree or certificate.

## **REVIEW ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS.**

Many colleges, especially private institutions, have very specific admission requirements. These include admission tests scores, high school grade point averages, performance in science and math and evidence of involvement in school or community activities. Some schools may require applicants to have taken two years of the same world language in high school while others require a year of Fine Arts. If a school you are considering has admission requirements that are beyond your reasonable expectations, you should look elsewhere.

## **CONSIDER THE FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE.**

Most colleges and universities offer grants and scholarships. Sometimes these are for very specific areas of study.

You may want to enroll at the college offering you the most or biggest scholarships and grants. Remember to do the math, though: If a private university offers you a \$10,000 scholarship but tuition starts at \$25,000 per year, you will still need to pay \$15,000 per year. By comparison, according to the College Board Trends in Higher Education, in-state tuition for 2015-2016 at a four-year Illinois public university costs, on average, just over \$13,000 per year\* — and that's before financial aid or scholarships are considered. Tuition at a community college like Harper can cost between \$2,500 and \$3,000 per year.

## **KNOW THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**

Many colleges and universities have specific application deadlines. If you miss the deadline, your application may not be considered. Applications can be submitted beginning in the fall of your senior year.

## **LIMIT YOUR CHOICES.**

Doing research is absolutely necessary to making the right decision. However, there are so many choices out there that you may feel overwhelmed. A good strategy is to narrow your choices down to five institutions. When you are down to five, focus on finding out more about each specific institution.

## **CONSIDER THE INTANGIBLES.**

Attending a college or university depends on many factors, including cost. Be sure to look at where the college is located. For example, would you be comfortable studying and/or living in an urban or rural area? Be sure that you also consider the student life opportunities, extracurricular activities and career path planning support.

\*<http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-and-fees-sector-and-state-over-time-1>

# THE ABCs OF THE ACT AND OTHER EXAMS

## **ACT**

The ACT is divided into two parts. The most important part consists of four separate tests: English, mathematics, science reasoning and reading. A writing test, which is optional but must be selected at the time of registration, measures skills for entry-level college composition classes. The question format is multiple choice, and the test is timed.

The scores of the ACT range from 1 to 36. Each college and university has its own criteria for how it evaluates the scores. The ACT also provides information about where a student's score ranks on the national scoring percentage.

Most educators recommend taking the ACT in April or June of a high school student's junior year.

## **SAT**

Created by the College Board, the SAT is an entrance exam used by many colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The SAT contains two sections (Reading/Writing and Math) and is scored out of 1600 points. Each section is worth a maximum of 800 points. There is an optional essay, which may be required for college admissions. All grade 11 students attending a public high school in the state of Illinois will have the opportunity to take the SAT, including the writing component, at no cost. For more specific information on the importance of SAT scores or SAT subject tests at the schools you're interested in, contact their admissions offices directly.

## **PRELIMINARY NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (PSAT/NMSQT)**

The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test is administered to sophomores and juniors who choose to register for the test. The PSAT provides firsthand experience for the SAT and also gives juniors the opportunity to qualify for National Merit scholarship money. The test measures evidence-based reading, writing, and math. District 211 schools offer the test to students in the month of October.

## **COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP)**

CLEP tests are given on several college campuses each year, including Harper (Search [harpercollege.edu](http://harpercollege.edu) for CLEP). Students can register for these tests through the college or university they plan to attend.

Depending on the scores, the students may earn college credit or advanced placement in the institution.

## **TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TOEFL)**

For people whose native language is not English, a college may require a TOEFL. This test is designed to evaluate a student's proficiency in English. This test is required in addition to the requirement of the ACT.

# ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP<sup>®</sup>)

With AP courses, students can get a feel for the rigors of college level studies while they still have the support of a high school environment. When students take AP courses, they demonstrate to college admission officers that they have sought out an educational experience that will prepare them for success in college and beyond. Resourceful and dedicated AP teachers work with their students to develop and apply the skills, abilities and content knowledge they will need later in college. Each of the 38 AP courses is modeled upon a comparable college course, and college and university faculty play a vital role in ensuring that AP courses align with college-level standards. Each AP course concludes with a college-level exam developed and scored by college and university faculty members as well as experienced AP teachers. AP exams are an essential part of the AP experience, enabling students to apply the new critical thinking skills they have learned in a comprehensive exam. Most two- and four-year colleges and universities worldwide recognize AP courses in the admission process and accept successful exam scores for credit, advanced placement or both. Performing well on an AP exam means more than just the successful completion of a course. Research consistently shows that students who score a 3 or higher typically earn higher GPAs in college and have higher graduation rates.

AP courses offered in D211 schools\*\*

- AP Art History
- AP Biology
- AP Calculus AB
- AP Calculus BC
- AP Chemistry
- AP Chinese
- AP Computer Science A
- AP Computer Science Principles

- AP Environmental Science
- AP European History
- AP French
- AP German
- AP Government & Politics
- AP Human Geography
- AP Language & Composition
- AP Literature & Composition
- AP Macroeconomics
- AP Microeconomics
- AP Physics 1: Algebra Based
- AP Physics 2: Algebra Based
- AP Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism
- AP Physics C: Mechanics
- AP Psychology
- AP Seminar
- AP Spanish
- AP Spanish Literature and Culture
- AP Statistics
- AP Studio - 2D Design
- AP Studio - 3D Design
- AP Studio/Drawing
- AP U.S. History
- AP World History

\*\*Check with your specific building for accurate list of course offerings.

Learn more about College and University AP Credit Policies at <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/creditandplacement/search-credit-policies>

# WHAT IS DUAL CREDIT?

Courses offered for dual credit stem from agreements between District 211 and colleges such as Harper College. Dual credit courses allow students to simultaneously earn high school and college credit. Students are able to receive college credit by successfully completing the course in addition to passing the assessment developed and/or recognized by the college or university. Some dual credit courses are offered at D211 schools and are taught by D211 teachers; other dual credit courses are offered at Harper College and are taught by Harper's professors. Some classes in the Project Lead the Way course sequence in the Applied Technology Department are available for college credit through the University of Iowa or Iowa State University. The Mathematics Department offers Multivariable Calculus M579 for dual credit through the University of Illinois. The Business Department offers Entrepreneurship B284 as a dual credit option through Northern Illinois University for those students planning to major in Business at the university.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR DUAL CREDIT?

High school students, generally juniors and seniors, who meet all applicable college course prerequisites, are eligible for dual credit enrollment. Students in these dual credit college courses should have a high level of motivation and adequate time to devote to studying college-level coursework.

## TRANSFERRING DUAL CREDIT COURSES

Credit earned from enrollment in dual credit courses is accepted by Illinois public colleges. Students who plan to attend a private or out-of-state school are encouraged to check with their D211 counselor, the college itself or use the Transferology website ([www.transferology.com](http://www.transferology.com)) to better determine whether a college will accept the dual credit.

## HOW DO I REGISTER FOR DUAL CREDIT COURSES?

### Harper College or Triton College

To receive college credit for completing a dual credit course, students will need to complete the online Permission to Participate Form. A high school counselor assigned to the dual credit process will assist all students in the class interested in pursuing dual credit with the online form. There is no charge to register for the dual credit course.

### University of Illinois, Iowa State, or the University of Iowa

To receive college credit for completing the dual credit course, students will need to complete the application specific to the university. A high school counselor assigned to the dual credit process or the classroom teacher will assist all students in the class interested in pursuing the dual credit with the application process. There is a fee ranging from \$200.00 to \$300.00 for the application depending on the university's process.

## ADVANTAGES OF TAKING DUAL CREDIT COURSES

Students have the opportunity to experience the rigor of a college-level course and get an early start on completing their basic college courses. Students save time by taking classes while in high school that can be applied toward a college degree. Students also gain experience as a college student, so they learn early what to expect from college-level courses. Students fulfill high school graduation requirements and, at the same time, earn college credits toward a specialized certification, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree. Most importantly, students save significant dollars as the average per credit hour cost for college coursework is \$425.00. Most courses are two to three credit hours.

# THE POWER OF 15: EXPERIENCING RIGOROUS COURSEWORK PRIOR TO COLLEGE

Students spend four years in high school planning and preparing for their college experience. Research indicates that students who engage in college-level coursework while still in the supportive high school environment have an increased likelihood of being successful in college and graduating from college in four years. Township High School District 211 students can enroll in rigorous, college-level coursework through both advanced placement and dual credit courses.

The Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS) partnership of Districts 211, 214, 220, and Harper College offers high school students a variety of dual credit and advanced placement courses to encourage all students to earn the equivalent of 15 college credit hours — typically the equivalent of five college classes — prior to high school graduation. Both advanced placement and dual credit coursework offers the opportunity for high school students to earn college credit prior to high school graduation. The financial incentive for students and their families, combined with the confidence a student gains from engaging in rigorous coursework prior to entering college, makes for a winning combination.

# HARPER COLLEGE PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP: TUITION EARNED

Under the Harper College Promise Scholarship Program every eligible incoming public high school student in Harper's district (Districts 211, 214 and 220) can earn up to two years of tuition at Harper College if they maintain solid grades, have good attendance, don't repeat classes, graduate on time and provide service to their community.

NOTE: Students must register for the Promise Program by December 15 of their freshman year.

For more information about the Harper Promise Scholarship, visit [harpercollege.edu/promise](http://harpercollege.edu/promise) or talk to your District 211 counselor.

# ABOUT COLLEGE MAJORS & CAREER CLUSTERS

The current employment outlook for the United States indicates that most jobs will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school. Whether a student is preparing to attend a four-year university, a two-year college or the work force, the exploration of possible careers and college majors is vital. Though many students may continue to change their minds about their career or college major selections, it is valuable for students to explore multiple areas while still in high school to assist in decisions about where their skills and passions lie.

The development of career pathways around the 16 career clusters will facilitate career and college major conversations. The 16 career clusters include:

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, Audio Visual Technology and Communication
- Business Management and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Interactive and Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics

Students are encouraged to log into their Career Cruising account to help them explore these options in further detail. Career Cruising is software available to students to explore college and career options specifically tailored to the students' interests and skills. Career Cruising offers a Matchmaker self-assessment which give students initial clusters to investigate. Students are encouraged to take the assessment multiple times throughout their high school careers as their interests may change over time.

Pathways within the 16 clusters represent a specific series of courses to be taken during high school. Students are encouraged to explore different clusters and pathways continually seeking connections to areas of passion and skill.

Students are encouraged to utilize the D211 College Majors and Career Clusters website ([www.d211careercluster.org](http://www.d211careercluster.org)) to identify D211 courses that align to each of the 16 career clusters.





# HOW DO I APPLY FOR COLLEGE?

# UNPACKING THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

When you apply for college, you send in more than the application. Most colleges require an application package.

Since colleges all have their own criteria for accepting students, you need to stay organized to make sure you are supplying the necessary information to each college. Colleges and universities may require the following pieces in your application package:

## **APPLICATION FORM**

This form is your basic tool for entering college. It asks for a variety of information about you and your high school career. Most colleges have online applications. Like many colleges and universities, Harper provides an online application form. You can access this form by visiting [harpercollege.edu/register](http://harpercollege.edu/register)

## **APPLICATION FEE**

Some colleges charge students an application fee ranging from \$25 to \$60. Other colleges do not charge any fee at all. If you are from a lower-income family, the college can often waive the application fee. Check with the college's admission office for information about fees and fee waivers.

## **HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT**

Colleges want to see an official record of your high school grades. Some require the official transcript during the admission process, while others allow students to self-report their academic record. All colleges will require a final transcript after graduation. District 211 has partnered with Parchment, an online transcript service. Students are given registration information during junior year.

## **ADMISSION TEST REQUIREMENTS (ACT/SAT SCORE)**

Almost all colleges and universities require you to take an admission test. Please note that you can select four institutions to receive your scores for free when registering for the ACT or the SAT. If taking the SAT, you can still send four free score reports to colleges up to nine days after taking the test.

## **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

Many colleges ask students to provide letters of recommendation as part of the application process. Students should follow the instructions on the application to determine how many letters of recommendation are required and who should author them. Some colleges do not require letters of recommendation as part of the application process.

## **APPLICATION ESSAY**

A number of schools require applicants to write an essay as part of their application package. The essay is an opportunity to express your individuality and explain why you want to attend the specific school.

## **ENTRANCE INTERVIEW**

Some colleges require students to come in for an interview as part of the application process. Even if the interview is not required by the school itself, you may want to request an interview in order to get a better idea of what it would be like to attend that school.

## **AUDITION/PORTFOLIO**

If you are applying for a program in the performing or fine arts such as theatre, music, dance or art, you may need to supply a portfolio of your work or perform an audition. The portfolio is a collection of your art and can be submitted in a variety of forms including electronic submission.

# WOW THEM WITH LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Most colleges today require letters of recommendation. Letters can be from a teacher, administrator, counselor or other adult who knows you well.

## KEEP THESE POINTS IN MIND:

- Give your letter writers plenty of time to prepare their letters—at least one month.
- If a college or university does not request a specific instructor to write a letter, consider using an English, math or science teacher to write your letter. If you plan on studying music, theatre or art, though, you're better off asking a teacher who is familiar with your accomplishments or skill in those areas.
- Use a current reference. Do not ask for a letter from someone who taught you in your freshman year.
- Consider using a teacher who knows your involvement in extracurricular activities outside the classroom.
- Communicate with the letter writer. Let the teacher or counselor know about any specific activities in high school that were special to you.
- On your application form, waive your right to review the letters of recommendation. The college or university views the letters as more credible if you haven't reviewed them.
- Follow up with thank-you notes to everyone who has written you a letter of recommendation.

# ESSAY AND INTERVIEW TIPS

Many colleges and universities require you to submit an essay with your application. The topic of this essay is usually the reason(s) you want to attend that particular college. Some colleges give two choices and ask what you hope to accomplish in your life as the additional topic. Other colleges require an in-person interview so that they can find out about you first-hand.

Experts advise students to follow the tips below to create a good essay for a college application:

## MAKE YOURSELF SHINE

Think of the essay as a stage where you can shine. This is an opportunity to show the application committee what makes you special and interesting.

## KEEP THE TOPIC SPECIFIC

In the essay, many colleges ask you to describe yourself, an experience that influenced your life or a special interest and its significance. Often, the essay involves describing an extracurricular activity you have enjoyed. Before you write the essay, come up with a list of several essay topics and the key points involved in each one. Then choose the topic about which you feel most strongly.

## OUTLINE YOUR ESSAY

List all the items that apply to your essay and then organize them. Start with a statement of purpose, then address the individual items and conclude with a restatement of your essay.

## **PAY ATTENTION TO THE OPENING PARAGRAPH**

Your opening paragraph plays a large role in the success of your essay. There are several approaches you might use including starting with a quotation, a rhetorical question or an anecdote you plan to expand upon in the essay.

## **REVIEW AND REWRITE**

Do not settle for your first effort. Rewrite the essay. Then edit the final draft one more time and be diligent in your proofreading for spelling or grammar errors. When you think it's perfect, have a teacher review it and give you feedback.

## **IMPRESS THE APPLICATION COMMITTEE**

If you are required to take part in a college interview, there are some things that can help you successfully complete this part of the application process:


- Check the college's policy on interviews by calling them or visiting their website.
- Prepare to be asked about your favorite subjects, future plans, why you want to attend the college, extracurricular activities, people you admire and your strengths and weaknesses.
- Use the interview as two-way communication to find out more about the college. Consider asking what orientation activities can help you transition to college and internships in your areas of interest on campus. Ask other questions, such as the rate of student retention (i.e., how many students continue from one year to the next and on to completion of their program of study), transfer rates, reasons for transfer and more. Another good idea is to ask to meet current students to get their perspectives. Be sure you get contact information or connect via social media to follow up later with any other questions you might have.

## **GET THE COMPETITIVE EDGE**

Your grades, extracurricular activities and letters of recommendation play an important role in gaining entrance to the college or university of your choice.

## **IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS**

- Neatness counts. Take your time working through the application. If applying online, you can save pieces and print them to proof, if necessary.
- Spelling errors are unacceptable.
- Be sure to keep your options open. You may not be accepted by your first-choice school and may need to choose the next best option.



**APPENDIX A:  
ADDITIONAL  
RESOURCES**

# QUESTIONS TO ASK A COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

1. What are your admissions standards and what kind of student are you looking for?
2. What are the admissions deadlines I need to know?
3. What are the tuition, room and board, and comprehensive costs of this school?
4. What kinds of financial aid are available, including merit based aid? Is there a separate scholarship application?
5. How large is the student population? What is the male/female ratio?
6. What is the makeup of the student body (i.e., from what states, commuter vs. residential, religious backgrounds, most popular majors)?
7. What is the campus like (i.e., size, location and distance to the nearest city or downtown area)?
8. What is the housing situation? Where can freshmen live? What are the dorms like?
9. What percentage of students return for their sophomore year? What percentage graduate?
10. Do you have my major? What are the strongest majors?
11. What is the average class size for freshmen? For upperclassmen? Are classes typically taught by professors or graduate students?
12. Are there opportunities for research, independent study, internships or study abroad?
13. Are there fraternities and sororities on campus? If so, what percentage of the student body is involved?
14. Do you have an honors program?
15. Describe the job placement program both during school and after graduation. How about placement in medical or law school—is there help?
16. Do you have career planning and counseling services?
17. What arrangements must I make to visit your campus?
18. What is special about this school, and why should I attend this one over a similar school?

# COLLEGE & CAREER PLANNING CALENDAR

## JUNIOR YEAR

- Begin career and college research in your high school's college/career center.
- Explore college options using [careercruising.com](http://careercruising.com)
  - » Username: d211- yourlastname + the four numbers you have been assigned (e.g., d211-johnson1234)
  - » Password: 3 zeroes + your District 211 ID (e.g., 000XXXXXX)
- Sign up for PSAT/NMSQT test (given at all District 211 schools in October).
- Meet with appropriate college, military or career representatives visiting high schools.
- Attend First Generation College Symposium at Palatine High School.
- Attend District 211 College Night at Palatine High School.
- Meet with college admission representatives when they visit your school.
- Attend "treks" offered by your school for careers of interest.



**First Semester  
August-December**

- Attend College Planning Seminar for juniors and parents (dates to be announced by home high school).
- Register and take the ACT and/or SAT Reasoning Test during their junior year.
- Review career/college requirements and carefully choose courses for senior year.
- Visit college campuses (a good time to visit is during spring break).
- Schedule an appointment for college visit(s) with admissions staff.
- Ask to meet with professors and/or students and see facilities for intended major.
- Talk to your counselor or the college counselor in your school to develop a list of good college matches.
- Retake ACT or SAT, if necessary.



**Second Semester  
January-May**

- Continue campus visits and college interviews; narrow your list of prospective colleges.
- Attend college programs for high school students.
- Work or intern at a summer job that relates to your major/career goals.
- Work on your personal statement.



**Summer**



## SENIOR YEAR

- Meet individually with your school counselor/college counselor to discuss post-secondary plans.
- Register to retake ACT and/or SAT Reasoning Test, as necessary.
- Meet with appropriate college, military, and career representatives.
- Attend Financial Aid Seminar for parents (date to be announced by home high school).
- Complete (with parents) the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible on or after October 1 to apply for federal/state/college financial aid.
- Attend First Generation College Symposium at Palatine High School.
- Attend District 211 College Night at Palatine High School.
- Finalize college choices and apply online.
- Visit colleges (good times are over school holidays).
- Complete all college applications before winter break.
- Check individual colleges for:
  - » Special “early decision, early action” requirements
  - » Letter of recommendation requirements
  - » Application deadlines, some of which are as early as October 15
  - » Specific majors with limited enrollment deadlines (i.e., engineering, aviation, architecture)
  - » Specific scholarship deadlines
- Remember to request transcript through your home high school via Parchment
- Take SAT Subject Tests, if required by your college choices
- Investigate scholarship opportunities through the College Resource Center in your school and complete applications (These are also posted on your school website).
- Request that mid-year transcripts be sent to colleges that require them.
- Revisit your college of choice during spring break.
- Register for and take advanced placement tests.
- Notify all colleges to whom you have applied of your decision by May 1.
- Submit your housing deposit to school of choice (if applicable).



Start. Finish. Go Forward