

Things to know when applying to college

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WHAT KIND OF STUDENT DO THE COLLEGES WANT?

When you are considering what colleges are seeking in their prospective students, realize that the more selective schools typically receive many, many more (sometimes thousands more) applications from *qualified* students than they can possibly accept. This means that these colleges are denying admission to "acceptable" students: many with high SAT scores and near-perfect grade point averages.

Most admission offices think not in terms of a large applicant "pool," but in terms of many smaller applicant "puddles," all of which have their demanding college constituencies. High grades and test scores mean better statistics in the next issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, and that makes the President happy. The coaches are looking for good athletes. The band director needs a new clarinet player. The development office is reviewing the applicants for hidden fortunes. The minority student population is not large enough and diversity is important. Perhaps you are applying to a college one of your parents attended. You will be put into a special pool for legacies. The examples of divergence from the "usual" process could go on and on.

Having acknowledged that there are, then, always special factors coming into play, one can nevertheless consider the following several factors which are considered in the admission process at most colleges. They are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

- [high school performance](#) (most important)
- [high school course selection](#)
- [academic rigor of high school](#) and relative performance of students
- [scores on standardized tests](#) (get you in the ballpark)
- [out-of-class activities](#) (distinguish you)
- [application essays](#) (your chance to say what you want about yourself)
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YOUR TRANSCRIPT

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Your transcript is the single most important part of your application to any college. Most high schools will provide at least one unofficial copy of the student's transcript to the student. While errors are rare, they do occur, and you should check your transcript very carefully for accuracy before your senior year. Among other information, the following is usually found on your transcript:

- **Where you are attending high school-** This helps put you and your performance into a larger context.
- **The courses you have taken-** Most schools list every course taken from freshman year through senior year. Colleges take note of accelerated schedules, honors and advanced courses, and AP/IB courses. Sometimes courses taken during the summer, for either high school or college credit, are also noted.
- **The courses you are taking in your senior year-** The courses you take in your senior year play an important role in your admission to certain colleges, especially the more selective ones. Even if you have no grades yet when your transcript is mailed, your senior year courses will probably be listed.
- **The grades you have earned-** Yes, colleges want students who have done well in high school. *Performance predicts performance.* Most colleges do look back to your freshman and sophomore years. Your junior year grades, however, being the most recent, receive a more careful review. The colleges to which you apply will probably request a **Mid-Year Grade Report**, on which your counselor will update your transcript with senior year grades. These grades will then receive an even more careful review.

In most cases, *the grades you have earned and the courses you have taken will determine the schools to which you have a reasonable chance of admission.* You can see what kind of student you have been by reviewing your grades just like an admission officer can. Are you an average student? A poor student? An exceptional student? Late bloomers are not necessarily doomed. Admission officers notice trends, both up and down. Have your grades been getting better each marking period? Did you have a poor start in your sophomore year? Why? Are you stronger in the sciences and math than you are in the humanities? You should think about questions such as these when you are writing your essays and/or during an interview.

- Depending on your school, attendance information, disciplinary information, awards, honors, and/or standardized test scores could also appear on your transcript. You should find out and know what information colleges will learn about you from your transcript.

Your school's profile: Chances are that most of the admission officers reading your applications will be familiar with your school. This is a part of their job, and they are good at what they do! They will be reviewing your performance and how you have performed relative to your classmates. They will look at the courses you have taken and what courses were offered. They will want to know what opportunities were presented to you, and which ones you pursued. The **profile** helps the admission officer interpret your transcript and make these judgments. A copy of the school profile is usually sent with each copy of the transcript. Typically, a profile will contain the following information: a brief history of the school, community information, accreditation information, general information on the students and faculty, information and statistics on admission to your school (if it is not open to all), a summary of sports and activities available, a summary of academic procedures, an explanation of your school's policy on ranking students, a grading scale, a description of the curriculum, a listing of advanced courses available, an explanation of graduation requirements, a distribution of SAT, ACT, and/or other standardized test scores, and a listing of where graduates have gone to college. School policies relevant to the admission process are usually explained as well (disciplinary disclosure, etc.).

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CHOOSE YOUR COURSES WISELY

Of course, college admission officers like to see good grades on your transcript. But your grades must be considered within a certain context. High schools vary greatly on the number and types of courses offered, but if you are considering selective colleges, know that the course selections you make, even as early as freshman and sophomore years, are important. Take advantage of *opportunities*. The rule of thumb is this: *challenge yourself as much as you can given the courses that your school has to offer; take courses that are appropriate to your academic record, abilities and interest.*

In many schools, it is in your senior year that you have the greatest flexibility in selecting your courses, and the college admission offices will be paying attention to your choices. Specifically, you are able to choose from more courses of relatively greater or lesser academic challenge. Perhaps you are able to continue to study a discipline or not, even if you have fulfilled your requirement for graduation in that subject.

If you are applying to a school which is very selective in its admissions, you can be certain that they will be looking for AP/IB, advanced, and/or other honors courses in your senior year schedule. If your school offers them, not to be taking such a course (or several) may well keep you from gaining admission to a selective school, even if you have always been a good student – *especially* if you have always been a good student. Take advantage of all that your school has to offer, right until you graduate.

In most schools, you choose your courses for the following year in the spring. When you have choices to make, especially for senior year, discuss your possibilities with your parents, your teachers and your school counselor.

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STANDARDIZED TESTS

Most colleges and universities require their applicants to take at least one standardized test for their consideration for admission. For most students, this usually means taking the SAT I: Reasoning Test (formerly called the SAT). Most selective colleges also require one, two, or even three SAT II: Subject Tests (formerly called Achievement Tests). If you live in certain parts of the country, the ACT may be the more common test. The ACT is another standardized test used for college admission. Most colleges and universities will accept *either* the SAT or the ACT. Sometimes the ACT can be taken instead of the SAT I, and sometimes instead of both the SAT I and SAT II. The ACT is a test which most students should consider taking at least once; by doing so, you could be giving yourself more options. For a comparison summary of the two tests, [click here](#).

Whatever standardized test(s) you take, remember that **you are responsible for seeing to it that the respective testing agency forwards your score(s), in a timely fashion, to the colleges to which you will applying**. Your test scores may or may not appear on your high school transcript, but even when they do, most colleges will still want an official report from the testing agency.

You are also **responsible for registering yourself** for each of the standardized tests you take. Registration materials area available in your school guidance or college counseling office, and you can also register online at www.collegeboard.com for SAT I and II, and at www.act.org for the ACT.

To see a typical standardized testing schedule for juniors, [click here](#).

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TYPICAL STANDARDIZED TESTING SCHEDULE FOR JUNIORS:

MARCH/APRIL or MAY:

Take the SAT I for the first time. The advantage of the March/April test date is having your score sooner for summer planning with your counselor. The advantage to the May date is the Question-and-Answer service.

You do not have to send your scores to colleges yet.

SPRING:

International students should take the TOEFL at least once.

APRIL or JUNE:

Take the ACT to give yourself more options. You do not have to report your scores to colleges yet.

JUNE:

Take the SAT II: Subject Tests; talk with your counselor about withholding your score(s). Most juniors will take American History, Writing, and one of the Mathematics tests. Not all juniors will need to take the Subject Tests, but generally, most should consider them.

You do not have to send your scores to colleges yet.

FALL:

International students should re-take the TOEFL, if necessary.

OCTOBER:

Take the SAT I a second time if you feel like you can improve your score. This will probably be the last testing date acceptable for students applying early action/decision.

Students who are interested in taking a second ACT, or in taking it for the first time, should take it now.

NOVEMBER:

Take SAT II: Subject Test(s) again if you feel like you can improve your score, or if you want to take other subjects. Don't withhold scores.

Release any withheld Subject Test scores so that they reach colleges on time.

DECEMBER:

Only if your first two scores were not as you would have liked, and if you feel like you can improve with another administration, take the SAT I again.

There is another ACT administration this month.

JANUARY:

There is a testing date for the SAT I and SAT II, but it is too late for many colleges. With planning, you will not have to rely on this test date.

Either when registering for your last SAT I or SAT II, or after you have seen your scores from your last test, have your score record sent to the colleges to which you are applying. If you have withheld scores, keep in mind that you must release them before you send your score report to colleges which want them.

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ACTIVITIES

You have read many times that your academic and testing record will be the single most important determining factor in your admission decisions. On the other hand, your grades and test scores do not reflect everything about you which may of interest to a college. Your involvement in out-of-class activities might reveal special talents you possess, such as unusual scientific or technical skills, musical ability, journalistic competence, or artistic talents. Your problem-solving skills, organizational abilities, leadership skills and maturity are often demonstrated through your involvement in activities. Drive and initiative, entrepreneurial ability, and dedication to some service activity above and beyond what is required are all attractive to the admission office.

Selective colleges look for students who will bring to their campuses something special. What are you going to contribute to that community? Chances are that if you were involved in activities in high school, you will continue to be involved in college. Remember, however, that the colleges will not be impressed by a long laundry list of activities and club memberships. What impresses them are some of the qualities described above-- qualities such as dedication and commitment, accomplishment and recognition, and movement into positions of leadership and increased responsibility. What do your activities-- in school and out-- say about you?

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THE INTERVIEW

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The interview is probably the time in the application process when the student experiences the most anxiety. There is a big difference between dropping an essay in the mail and sitting five feet from someone looking at you in the face. Interviews can play an important role in the application process at many schools, especially at the smaller and more selective colleges. Being nervous is expected and understandable, but the truth is, there is little to be nervous about. It would take a lot of work to "blow" an interview completely. Unless you are very shy and uncomfortable, they almost always will work in your favor. Any personal contact you have with a representative from the admission office strengthens your application and makes it more "real." Take advantage of your interviews and get one whenever you can. There are several different types of interviews:

Alumni Interviews-- Many colleges, so overwhelmed by the numbers of applicants in recent years, have stopped offering interviews by members of their admission staffs. Instead, the schools farm out their interviews to trained alumni who live in your area. For some colleges, this is a required part of the application process and for others it is an option. The alumnus will usually contact you a couple of weeks after your application is received by the admission office. Sometimes you are given the name and number of the alumnus and you initiate the contact. Meetings usually take place at the office or home of the interviewer, or in some cases, at your home. Approach these interviews as conversations. Take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about the school. If you can manage to keep the control of the conversation (not in a forceful way), then you leave yourself less open to feeling out of control. Some interviewers will, however, have a list of questions which they are expected to ask. Whether they say the interview will "count" or not, your interviewer will probably send a report back to the school and this report will probably become a part of your application file.

Group Interviews-- Many colleges, in conjunction with their campus tour, offer group interviews for many prospective students at one time. This is designed to be more of an information session and carries little evaluative weight. At the same time, however, it would be easy to make a good or a bad impression depending on the questions you might ask, your appearance, and other factors.

On-campus Personal Interviews-- If it is possible, getting a personal interview with an admission officer is the most desired type of interview. These are conducted in the admission office and usually take about 45 minutes. While the interview is chance for you to learn more about the school through hearing about it and asking questions, the primary purpose of this type of interview is evaluative. Even so, if the interview develops into a relaxed conversation, this is usually a good sign. Remember that it is all right to politely express a difference of opinion or to say that you do not know something if you do not.

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Interviewing tips to keep in mind-- Regardless of the type of interview, you should keep the following points in mind:

- Schedule your interview well enough in advance if you are seeking one at the college.
- Do your homework before the interview. Review the college's literature and know the basics about the institution.
- Arrive at least fifteen minutes before your appointment so that you are not rushed or late.
- Don't take your parents with you into the actual interview. If they have accompanied you, they should wait elsewhere. If they have questions, and it is appropriate that they should, they should ask them after your interview has concluded.
- Dress neatly and cleanly. If in doubt, dress conservatively. Don't try to overly impress with your appearance: be yourself.
- Don't bring "stuff" with you to the interview. This is a chance to talk. One exception would be having a copy of your transcript available in case you're asked for it.
- During the interview, be honest: be YOURSELF. Listen and take time to reflect. Try to be energetic and enthusiastic, but not in an overbearing way. Make eye contact and use a firm, confident handshake.
- Know the name of the person who interviewed you and send a brief thank-you note within a few days of your interview.
- Express yourself clearly and demonstrate self-confidence and maturity.

What one selective college asks—Here are some of the areas one college asks its alumni interviewers to cover with its applicants:

- Student and family background.
- Academic background: high school experiences, academic interests, programs available, honors, etc.
- Extracurricular involvement: level and significance of involvement, leadership roles, honors, travel and work experiences, community work, volunteer service.
- Academic and career interests.
- Exposure to the university.
- Overall evaluation.

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Common Application

COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

The application forms used by colleges and universities vary a great deal. Some ask for little more than basic biographical and academic information on one side of a piece of paper while others can be several pages long. Regardless of the form it takes, it is important that you recognize the fact that the application is the primary tool the admission offices use to collect information from you. The questions asked and the credentials required tell you a lot about the school, and the answers you provide, and *how* you provide them, tell the school a lot about you.

Completing applications takes time, a lot of time if you are going to do a good job. You should know that even the mechanics of the completion of the application form is a significant "sorter" for the admission office. A sloppy, incomplete or late application sends a very clear message to the college, whether that was your intention or not. You would expect that the college would favor the applicants who have taken time with their application, have followed directions, and who have presented themselves in the best possible manner.

You should answer all of the questions asked on the applications honestly and forthrightly. The application is not a place for you to be modest. List your accomplishments and activities as requested. Some students find that attaching an easy-to-read résumé is easier than trying to make your information fit within certain boxes or on lines. If you attach anything additional to your application, however, be certain that you have followed the instructions on that application very carefully. Some schools will not accept attachments! The basic information from most applications is transferred into a computer file when it is received, and not having the necessary information in the appropriate place at the time of entry into the program could be detrimental.

In the past few years, there has been a proliferation of computerized and on-line applications which are making the mechanics of applying much easier and neater. In many viewbooks and paper applications,

you will be offered a disk version of a college's application if requested. By investigating the Web sites of many colleges and universities, you will find still other applications which can be started and/or completed on-line. Many of the sites listed in the first section on the links page provide online application services for hundreds of colleges. Be careful: you should not have to pay any company a fee over the college's usual application fee.

Have your completed application proofread and be certain that it is neat and clean. It is suggested, but not necessary, that you type or word-process your applications. Do not rely on mom or dad, or mom's or dad's secretary to do your typing. A "sanitized" application or essay could actually work against you. Before mailing any application, you should make a copy of it to keep for your records. Make sure you affix the correct amount of postage to the envelope. Inform your school counselor as you mail each application.

Some colleges request that all application materials be sent together in one envelope. Many colleges have a two-part application process. These schools ask you to first submit some basic information along with the application fee and then send you the longer second application. Some state university systems, such as those in California and New York, centralize their application processes. One application is completed and mailed to a central office, along with the appropriate fees for the campus(es) to which you are applying. The central office then distributes your application to the campuses you specify.

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Deadlines



APPLICATION DEADLINES AND RELATED TERMS

It is critical that you know the application deadlines for the schools to which you are applying. To apply late usually elicits the same response as not applying at all. Below are some important terms used in the application and admission process by most colleges and universities. It is important that you understand them and the differences between them.

Application Deadline: In the application literature for each college you will find a date by which all application materials are due. In some cases, the date will be a postmark date, and in others it will be a date by which all materials must be received. If this is not specified, you should assume that all materials must be received by the date indicated.

Candidate (or Applicant) Notification Date: This is the date by which you will receive a decision, or the date by which the decisions will be mailed from the school. Notification dates for the more competitive schools are usually in late March and early April. Most colleges will *not* provide acceptance information by phone. Be patient!

Rolling Admissions: Many schools, especially state universities and smaller private schools, will review your application as soon as all supporting materials have been received. You will usually receive your decision within three to six weeks of the receipt of your application materials by the admission office. When a school has a Rolling Admission policy, there may not be a set application *deadline*; rather, applications are usually accepted within a certain time period (October through March, for example) as long as there are spaces in the freshman class. At some of the more selective colleges with rolling admissions (for example, public universities in the Midwest), it is advisable that you apply by December of your senior year. At some institutions with rolling admissions, Honors Programs and/or scholarship competitions may have earlier deadlines (the University of Maryland is an example).

Candidate's Reply Date: The date of **May 1** has been accepted by most colleges and universities in the United States as the date by which all admitted students must inform the school they are planning on attending of their intention to enroll. A non-refundable deposit is usually due by this date. Submitting your reply or deposit after May 1 will jeopardize your acceptance and place in the freshman class. In addition to notifying the school you will attend of your intentions, you are

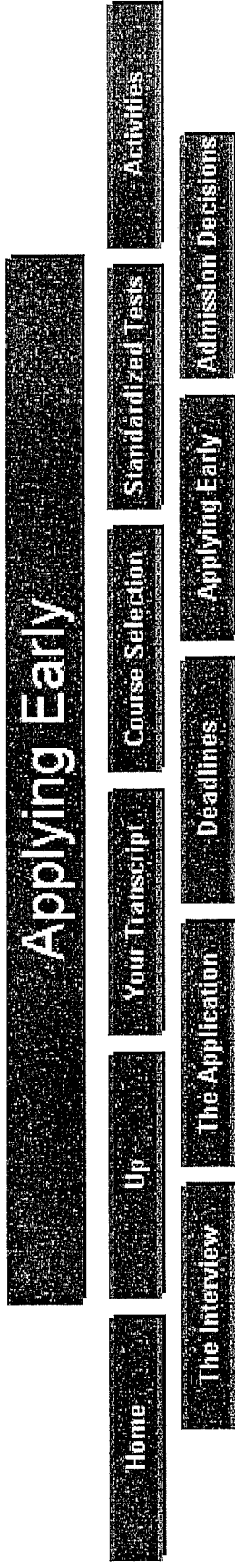
also obligated to notify all other schools to which you have been accepted of your plans *not* to attend. Sending a deposit to more than one college is not ethical and will jeopardize your acceptances at each of the schools involved. If a school asks you to reply or submit a non-refundable deposit *before* May 1, you should speak with your school counselor.

The application process for the **U.S. Military Academies** begins in the spring of your junior year. The application process for the academies is a two-tiered process: you apply to the academies in which you are interested and at the same time apply for the required nominations from Members of Congress or other officials.

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APPLYING EARLY

Many students like the idea of applying to colleges early, having the process completed by Christmas vacation, and relaxing during the second semester. Applying early might, in fact, be a good idea for *some* students, but it is not necessarily the recommended route for you. Discuss your options with your counselor during the summer and early fall. Below is an explanation of some of the terms used to describe the various ways of applying early:

Early Decision: Several schools offer an admission plan for those students who are certain of their college choice during the first semester of their senior year. Application deadlines for early decision plans are usually in November and December. A student who applies to a school under an early decision plan must sign a *contract* (as do his parents and college counselor) which states that the student will attend that school if accepted. She or he also states that he will withdraw any and all other applications submitted to other schools and that he will not submit any others. Applying to a school early decision is a serious and binding commitment. *Please do not violate an Early Decision commitment.*

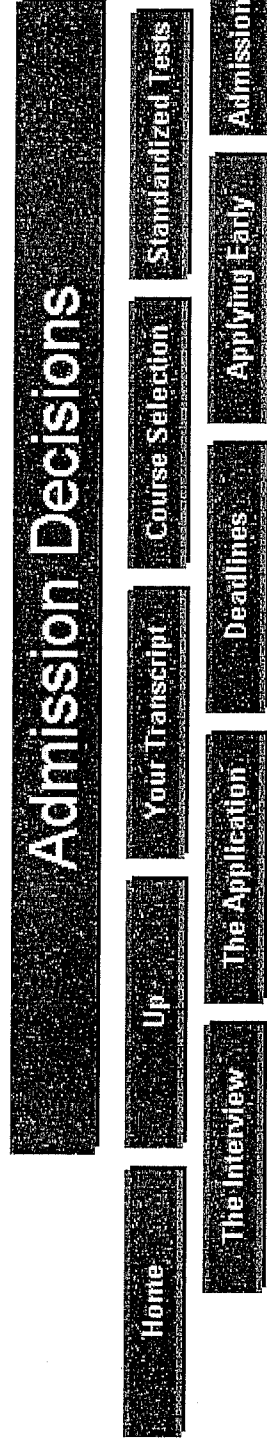
Students applying early are reviewed primarily on the basis of their performance through junior year, so the early decision option is usually advisable only for students with very good academic records. Responses for early decision applicants are usually received before Christmas of the senior year, and they may be acceptance, denial or deferral to the regular spring applicant pool. A student may apply to only one school as an early decision candidate, and he should be sure that that is the school he or she would like to attend. If you are interested in applying as an early decision applicant, it is important to discuss all of the considerations with your counselor soon after senior year begins.

Early Action: This is a decision plan similar to that described above, but the important difference is that your acceptance is *not* binding. Most early action deadlines are in November and December, and you will usually receive a decision before Christmas break. You will have until the **May 1** Candidate's Reply Date, however, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan. Decisions under this plan are made primarily on the basis of your performance through junior year. It is usually more difficult to get accepted under an early action plan than it is through the regular admission process in the spring.

Early Admission: Some colleges and universities accept students before they have finished high school, usually at the end of the student's junior year. Admission is rare under this plan, and it is only appropriate for the student who has taken an accelerated high school academic program, has an exemplary high school record, and who is mature enough to make the early move to college. It is not recommended for most students.

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THICK ENVELOPE OR THIN?

You will receive a response from each of the schools to which you have applied by early to mid- April, and usually well before then. Of course, the response you want to see is an acceptance, the feared response is the denial. There is one other response which you might see: the *Wait List* response. Here is an explanation of each of the responses you might receive.

ACCEPTANCE

Congratulations! You're in. If you have applied for financial aid, you will receive that information at the same time or shortly after you receive your letter of admission. Unless you have applied under a binding, early decision plan, you have until May 1 to make up your mind about which college you will actually attend. On May 1, you will have to have a deposit at the one college you will attend in the fall.

DENIAL

The answer no one wants to receive. Many wonder about appealing a denial, but unless you can show that something significant was overlooked, it is very unlikely that the college will change its mind. If you have planned and applied appropriately, you will have other wonderful choices. Don't fall in love with any one college. Don't let your self-worth get caught up in whether or not a particular college accepted you. Look ahead; be positive.

DEFERRAL

If you have applied somewhere early, either early action or early decision, you might find that your application has been deferred. This means that you were not strong enough to admit, nor weak enough to deny in the early round. The admission office will await your mid-year grades and any other supplemental information you send in support of your application. A decision will be made with the regular round of review, usually in early spring.

THE WAIT LIST

Many colleges accept a larger number of students than needed to fill their freshman classes. They know that most students

apply to more than one school, and that most will be accepted by more than one. This means that every school will accept students who will turn down their offers of acceptance. Colleges and universities place *extra* qualified students on their wait lists and accept students from the list if there is space in the class after the May 1 response date. In many cases, you will not be notified of your acceptance off of the wait list until long after May 1, so you should proceed with notifying another school of your intention to enroll by May 1. If you are then taken off the wait list at the school you wish to attend, you would have to forfeit the deposit made to the first school. If you find yourself dangling on a wait list, it is always a good idea to ask yourself, "How much is attending this *one* college really worth to me?" If you find yourself placed on a wait list, check with your counselor for tips on pursuing your eventual admission.

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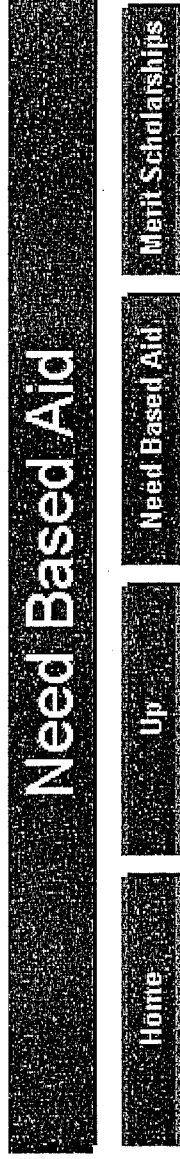
[Merit Scholarships](#)

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

With the total costs of many private colleges now exceeding \$35-40,000 per year, financial aid is a topic on the minds of an increasing number of young people and their parents. Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind regarding financial aid is this: **You will not know whether or not you qualify for assistance, and you will not receive any aid, if you do not apply.** It is not uncommon for more than half of the students at some very well known schools to be receiving some type of financial assistance. For reliable and free information on financial aid programs, check out the [FinAid](#) website.

There are basically two different types of financial assistance offered by colleges and universities: need-based and merit-based.

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NEED-BASED ASSISTANCE

Every school will require that you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to be considered for aid. The FAFSA is available in high schools at the end of November but cannot be submitted until after January 1. It is also available on the web. Many schools will also ask you to complete the **CSS Financial Aid Profile**, a second form available in schools in the early fall and on the web, and with which you must send a processing fee. Both forms are submitted to processors who then calculate your expected family contribution and forward that information to you and to any schools to which you have asked the information be sent. The FAFSA calculations are based on federally legislated methodology. The Financial Aid Profile calculations take additional discretionary information into account, as requested by the various schools to which you are applying.

Some colleges ask that applicants for financial aid submit the school's own financial aid form directly to the school, in addition to the FAFSA, and sometimes the Financial Aid Profile as well. If this is the case for a school to which you are applying, be attentive to deadlines and provide complete information. There are **four** possible combinations of forms required for financial assistance: Some colleges will want only the FAFSA, some will want the FAFSA, Financial Aid Profile, and an institutional form, others will want the FAFSA and an institutional form, and still others will want the FAFSA and Financial Aid Profile. When applying for any type of financial aid, it is important to be accurate and prompt in filing all of your forms.

The Financial Aid Office at each institution will take the information provided by the form processor and put together a financial aid "package" which might be some combination of grant, scholarship, loan, and/or work-study. Unfortunately, many colleges are not able to meet 100% of the demonstrated need of their applicants. That means there might be a "gap" between what you can afford and what the college can provide to assist you. Often, the more attractive you are as a possible student, the more attractive your financial aid package will be.

Grants and **scholarships** are monies given to you by the college which do not have to be repaid. The **Pell Grant** is the largest of the federal grant programs, and its awards range from \$200 to \$2400. Determination is made on the basis of information provided by review of your FAFSA. The **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)** is another federal program (administered by the colleges) for students with exceptional need. Awards range from \$200 to \$4000 in

excess of the Pell amount.

Loans must be repaid and have different terms. The **Stafford Student Loan** is a federal program (administered by private lenders) based on need. Freshmen may borrow up to \$2625 per year. Amounts are increased for upperclassmen. The loan is interest free while the student is in college and until repayment begins. The federal government pays interest while you are still in school and for six months afterwards. The repayment period is five to ten years, and there is a 5% origination fee subtracted from the loan. **Perkins Loans** of up to \$3000 per year are federally funded and are offered by the colleges. They are based on need. The interest rate is 5% for the first four years and 8% for the last six years of the repayment period. Interest is not paid while you are a student and for nine months after graduation. **Unsubsidized Stafford Loans** are designed for students who do not demonstrate need. The terms are the same as for the Stafford Loan described above, except that interest must be paid while the student is in college. Repayment of principle begins upon graduation. **PLUS** (Parents Loans to Undergraduate Students) and **SLS** (Supplemental Loan to Students) **Loans** are also not based on financial need, but you usually must first apply for Pell and Stafford Loans before being considered. Both have yearly maximums. Interest rates are tied to the 52-week T-bill rate. Interest accumulates while you are a student, but payment can be deferred until after graduation. The repayment periods are five to ten years:

Most states and the District of Columbia have student loan and/or grant programs specifically for students of those jurisdictions. In some cases, the student must attend a college in the state to receive the benefit. Information on programs for your jurisdiction should be available in your high school guidance or college counseling office.

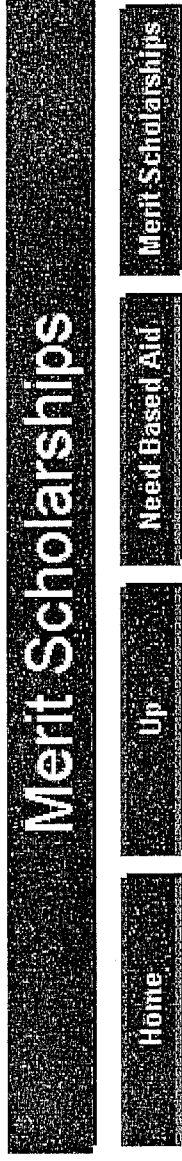
College Work Study is employment which you must take while in school, earning a salary which you are expected to contribute toward your expenses. The program is administered by the colleges, and the financial aid or work study office will help you find a job which qualifies. Most work study jobs are part-time and clerical in nature.

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MERIT-BASED ASSISTANCE

A growing number of colleges and universities are making available scholarship money which is awarded *not* on the basis of need, but for some outstanding quality or accomplishment demonstrated by the student. The only way to learn of these awards is to seek them out; check the literature you receive from the schools to which you are applying. Usually, in the viewbook or application materials, you will find information on merit awards. Sometimes there are special application procedures, and often, earlier deadlines than those for the regular application for admission. If you are interested, it is always a good idea to ask an admission representative from a college in which you are interested about the availability of merit money.

In addition to scholarship money which is awarded to top students, some colleges also have no-need scholarships for students who have demonstrated exemplary leadership, or who have participated in extensive community service work, or who are good debaters, or musicians, etc. Again, you have to review carefully the literature from the colleges in which you are interested.

Many privately-funded scholarships are also awarded each year, from businesses, associations, civic groups, corporations, and others. Your best bet for money from sources other than the colleges is with local organizations, as opposed to the large, national competitions. But, you can do a free scholarship search on the web at [FastWeb](#); you *will* have to register at the site.

BEWARE! of individuals and firms which claim to be able to uncover hidden riches available for you to use for college. If you are wondering about whether or not to take advantage of such a "service", speak with your counselor first. Remember, there are extensive, FREE, scholarship searches available on the web (see address above), which use the same databases used by firms which charge you. Click [here](#) for more information on scholarship scams.

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Student Athletes

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THE STUDENT-ATHLETE IN THE PROCESS

The college application process takes on some special considerations for student-athletes. If you are a player a coach wants, the results can be very rewarding.

Realistic Assessment

The NCAA and The Clearinghouse

Presenting Yourself: Be Proactive

The Courtship

College Checklist for the Student-Athlete

REALISTIC ASSESSMENT

The first, and most important task which the student-athlete faces is to make a decision about the extent to which she/ he would like to devote himself or herself to athletics in college. Many sports in college are year-round commitments. Depending on the school, the coach, and/or the sport, much of the student-athlete's time in college will not be his own. It is important to talk with student-athletes already in college as you decide for yourself what role you would like athletics to play in your college search and, subsequently, in your life as a college student.

The next step in pursuing your field of dreams is to take a realistic assessment of your athletic talent. This must usually be done with the guidance and input of the student-athlete's coach at school or outside of the school (with a community league, for example). Are you an athlete, a player, who will be of interest to college coaches? At what level? At what schools? Listen to the people you trust.

THE NCAA AND THE CLEARINGHOUSE

Most colleges and universities belong to the NCAA, and there are divisions of schools within the NCAA. Division I institutions are the larger sports power-houses. Division I schools usually recruit student-athletes in more than one sport and they offer athletic scholarships. Within Division I are sub-divisions for football. Division II institutions also recruit and offer scholarship money, but not nearly as much as at Division I schools. Division III institutions may or may not recruit actively,

and they do not offer athletic scholarships. Note that some Division I schools, as a matter of institutional or league policy, do not offer scholarship money: the Ivy League and some Patriot League schools are examples.

The NCAA has established regulations which determine whether or not a student-athlete is eligible to play college athletics, and these regulations differ according to Division. Students who have any interest in playing at a Division I or Division II school should register with the **NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse** in the spring of the junior year or in the summer before senior year. The Clearinghouse is a large and frustrating bureaucracy, and many student-athletes experience problems and delays in their certification process. Start early to avoid a panic. The student-athlete must be registered and qualified before he can play in college.

Your high school guidance or athletics office should have the forms necessary for the student-athlete to register with the NCAA. Also available are the NCAA rules and regulations related to recruiting. The student-athlete and his or her parents should become familiar with these rules, as a violation would make the student-athlete ineligible to play at *any* NCAA member institution.

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PRESENTING YOURSELF: BE PROACTIVE

The student-athlete must actively pursue those institutions/programs/coaches in which she or he is interested. You have to let coaches know you want to play for them! Unless you are a rare *blue-chip* athlete, you cannot afford to wait to have coaches find you.

Send an introductory letter to coaches. Most guidance offices will have resources to help you find coaches names and addresses; this is also available on many college websites. In the letter, highlight your academic as well as athletic achievements. College coaches want good students on their teams. You might want to include a sports **résumé** with your letter. Give your home coach's name and phone number, and ask for more information. Many coaches will follow-up with a recruiting questionnaire. Others may tell you that they are not looking for "new" athletes, and some may not respond at all to your letter.

If the coach expresses interest, he or she might ask you to send a **highlight video**. College coaches say they find these helpful, but they should not be more than five to ten minutes in length. The coach might offer to come watch you play in a game, meet or tournament in your community, and he or she might invite you to visit the college campus and meet team members.

You should make *unofficial* visits to the schools of *your* choice. Be sure to get a feel for the place apart from the world of athletics. See the section of this site on [college visits](#).

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THE COURTING PROCESS

Depending on how interested coaches are in having you join them, senior year can be a time of excitement and confusion. The student-athlete must become familiar with the rules regarding campus visits, but at the same time, she or he must be certain to speak with student-athletes already playing at the schools in which she or he is interested. If you are really good, you will have to keep a level head during the recruiting season. Take phone calls judiciously, and don't let your grades or relationships suffer.

The **National Letter of Intent** is a document sometimes used when the coach and the student-athlete have agreed to "accept each other." The recruiting process halts when the Letter is signed, but admission to the institution could still be pending. Student-athletes must always remember that even the best-intentioned coach has only one thing on his or her mind: the success of her or his team. Usually, many potential players are juggled and recruited for a smaller number of positions to be filled. Remember that **the admission office, not the coach, offers admission to a college or university!** And remember that **when you commit, you commit to the institution, not the coach!** Sometimes coaches leave their schools, and you want to select the *institution* which will be right for you.

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COLLEGE CHECKLIST FOR THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

Questions to Ask

- What is the level of competition at the college? Against what other colleges does it compete?
- What is the coach's philosophy toward his sport, her players, his or her school?
- How long has the coach been at the institution? Where was he before? Why did she leave?
- What is the graduation rate of all athletes? Of athletes playing your sport? (How many graduate in four years? i years?) How do these rates compare with the entire student population?
- Do athletes have mandatory study halls?
- Is there an academic advising/counseling staff available to help with course selection and academic difficulties?
- Are tutors available for all courses?
- How much time per week is required for practice?
- What does a typical daily schedule look like?
- What is the philosophy of the coaching staff toward training?
- What training facilities are available (weightroom, etc.)?
- What type of athletic rehabilitation program does the athletic department have?
- Must athletes live together? What are the accommodations like?
- Must you have your meals with the team? All? none? some?

- Can your scholarship be affected by injury? How?
- Are all injuries covered by a team insurance policy?
- Imagine that you are unable to play. Would you feel satisfied with the college academically and socially?
- Is scholarship money based on performance?
- Has the college a history of NCAA rules violations?
- Has drug use been an issue at the school? In the athletic program?
- Do you feel you will get enough playing time in your first year or afterwards?
- What is the possibility of your being red-shirted?
- If you need a fifth year, will the school finance it?
- How many other students is the coach recruiting for your position?
- What type of traveling does the team do? Who goes? What is the policy for making up work?
- Will you have to provide any of your own equipment? How much will it cost?
- What do current team members say about the college? the team? the coach? the fans?
- Has the coach a reputation for success in his sport?
- Did the coach answer all the questions you and your parents asked?
- How does this program compare to others you are considering?
- Did the coaches say anything bad about other schools you are considering?
- Were the coaches and players honest with you? Did you feel that you could trust the coaches?
- Were the coaches interested in academics? Did they ask about your educational and career interests?

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The Essay

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THE APPLICATION ESSAY

The application essay is probably the most dreaded part of the application for the student. Most selective schools require at least one, and sometimes several, essays.

Imagine all of the parts of your application on a table before an admission officer: your application, your transcript, your test scores, your recommendations. Think of your essay as being that part of your application which transforms your file from a collection of bits of information into a real person. If one of the essay questions is, "Provide us with any other additional information which might be helpful in evaluating your application," then do just that. This is your chance to make your application come alive. Especially at smaller and medium sized schools, the student who presents himself or herself in a lively, honest, and self-motivated image is improving his or her chances for admission.

Above all else, admission offices are looking for honesty, openness, directness and sincerity in your essays. You should not feel that you have to come up with something unusual or tragic. You should not try to give the reader what you think he or she wants. You should not use language with which you are not usually comfortable.

What should you do when writing your essays? Make sure you understand the question you are answering and answer it. Do not give one school the answer to an essay for another school unless the questions are exactly the same. Give yourself ample time to write good essays. Write a first draft and then put it away for a couple of days. Take it out and revise it. Put it away again. Polish it and then have someone else read it, for both content and grammatical and spelling errors. A sloppily written essay is an easy death for any applicant. Remember your audience and **be sure to show, not just tell**. Remember that longer does not necessarily mean better. If you are asked to keep your response within a certain space, do not exceed that space. If you are asked to hand-write your essay, do not use a word processor.

Be careful about getting too much help on your essays. It will show and it will spell doom if the reader gets the impression that the work is not your own. Someone who reads hundreds (or thousands) of them will be able to tell. **Write your own essays!**

The School Report

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THE SCHOOL REPORT/ COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION

Many colleges, and most selective colleges, require a letter or recommendation or statement from your school counselor. Be certain that you have taken enough time to talk with the counselor to whom you have been assigned long before you have application materials due so that he or she can write a specific, comprehensive, and informed letter about you. You may have to take the initiative in arranging the meeting(s).

Many colleges ask that you have your counselor complete and submit a **Counselor Report Form** or a **Secondary School Report**. Before submitting these forms to your guidance or college counseling office, be sure that you have provided any biographical information requested at the top of the form (you should type this information). If a school does not require a counselor letter or school statement, it will still want a copy of your transcript. You must let your counselor know that you are applying to such a school so that your transcript is mailed on time. Some high schools have forms and/or releases to complete for this purpose.

November, December and January get very busy in most high school guidance and college counseling offices, often with hundreds of applications being processed in a month's time. While you must be attentive to the application deadlines of the schools to which you are applying, **you must also be aware of the internal deadlines set by your school's guidance or college counseling office, as those deadlines often occur earlier than those of the colleges.** Determine your *earliest* application deadline work from there.

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Recommendations

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TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

[JUMP TO WAIVING ACCESS](#) [JUMP TO OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS](#)

Many colleges will ask that you have a teacher write a letter of reference on your behalf. Some ask for more than one teacher recommendation, and some even specify teachers of specific subjects. You should give careful consideration to your selection of the teachers you will ask to write letters for you. The teachers you choose should know you well--both in class and out. Teachers from junior and senior year are usually preferred, as are teachers of "core" academic subjects like math, English, history, and science. Choose a teacher about whom you feel confident writing about you. If you indicate a particular major of field of interest on your application, you should have letters which support that interest. For example, if you are interested in studying engineering, the college will look for a letter from a science or math teacher. If you are interested in a pre-law program, it would make sense to have letters from English and social studies teachers.

If you find that none of the colleges to which you are applying require a teacher recommendation, you might still consider having at least one teacher write on your behalf. Most students applying to the more selective colleges will have two teacher letters sent to each of their colleges.

Once you have selected your teachers, you must ask them if they will write letters for you. Remember that your teachers take this responsibility very seriously, and that they spend a considerable amount of time and effort preparing thoughtful and well-written recommendations for their students. You must give your teachers ample time to accomplish this task. If the teacher agrees to write a letter for you, you should offer to meet with him or her to answer any questions he or she might have for you.

Most schools which require letters will ask that the teacher also complete a teacher evaluation form. Before you give it to the teacher, be certain that you have provided all the necessary information requested at the top of the form, including your signature. In most cases, the teacher will not give the form or the letter back to you, but will mail them directly to the college (s) to which you are applying. Along with any college forms, you should give the teacher a stamped, addressed envelope for each of the schools to which you are applying.

Never ask a teacher to write a recommendation for you when there is not ample time to do so properly. Also, never ask a teacher to write a letter for you via a note left in the teacher's box or on the teacher's desk. After all of your letters have been written, thank the teachers who have written for you. When you get responses from the schools in the spring, let the teachers who have written for you know what the decisions are.

To waive or not to waive:

The Buckley Amendment (The Family Rights and Privacy Act) was passed in 1974 and allows you access to your application file and academic records once you have enrolled as a student at a particular school. Many recommendation forms will include a statement to the effect that you understand your right to view such information. You are then usually given the right to waive your right to access to the information on the form you are signing.

You should be aware of several points regarding your waiving your right to review your recommendations. The first is that they can be viewed only at the school you actually attend. Second, most schools retain in the student files only the student's application and the high school transcript, with all recommendations being discarded. An argument for signing the waiver is that the person who is writing for you will feel more freedom to write honestly and openly about you with the knowledge that you will not be reading the recommendation later. Some say that if you do not sign the waiver, you might be sending a message to the college that you have something to hide, or that you are concerned about something the teacher might say about you. No one knows for sure what effect your signing or not has on the person reading your application-- it is supposed to have no effect. We recommend that you *do* waive your right to access to the recommendation, but in doing so you are giving up a right to which you are entitled.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Many students ask about whether or not they should get extra letters of recommendation to support their application to a particular school. Such letters might be from alumni of that college or friends of the family in prominent positions. The rule of thumb is this: letters from people who do *not* know you *well* as a person, and specifically, as a student, **are not helpful**. In fact, letters from prominent people in the community, wealthy business people, and so on, sometimes put off the people reading the application and could work against you. IF you think an additional letter or two might be helpful to your application, you might think of asking a coach, an employer, an advisor, even a friend. Do not include more than one or two, however. Such letters should be sent directly to the Admission Office by the people writing them, and you should notify your school counselor of their having been requested or mailed.

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Common Application

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THE COMMON APPLICATION

In an effort to simplify the process for prospective applicants, nearly 250 private and public colleges and universities agree to work together to develop, distribute, and accept a generic application form. The form is called the **Common Application**, and an ample supply is kept on hand in most guidance and college counseling offices; a web-based version can be downloaded or completed online. Once you have completed the Common Application and have made copies of it, you may send it to as many of the participating institutions as you wish. The same is true of the school report and teacher evaluation forms. Of course, the appropriate application fees must be sent along with each copy of the Common Application. Some schools which accept the common application require you to provide supplemental information, and this is usually provided on a second form which is sent to you. It is wise, however, to check for supplemental material requirements at the Common Application website early in your application process.

Many students wonder whether or not the use of the Common Application will indicate to the college a lack of interest on the part of the student. They argue that, if the student were interested in that school, she/ he would request and use the school's own application form. In fact, each school participating in the Common Application group has agreed not to view the Common Application any differently than they would their own application. Many of the schools' own applications are actually Common Applications with that school's name imprinted on the forms. On the other hand, we recommend that when using the Common Application, you write a paragraph to accompany your application which explains why you are applying to that specific college: add something college-specific to the otherwise cookie-cutter Common Application. You should use the Common Application only if you are comfortable doing so. Discuss its use with your counselor.

Click here for a [list of colleges and universities](#) which accept the Common Application in 2003-2004.

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STUDENTS



TEACHERS/
COUNSELORS



COLLEGES/
UNIVERSITIES



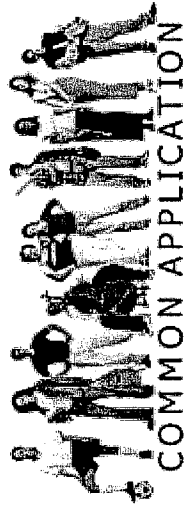
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FAQs



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Member Institutions 2003-2004

Adelphi University
 Agnes Scott College
 Albertson College of Idaho
 Albion College
 Albright College
 Alfred University
 Allegheny College
 American University
 Amherst College
 Antioch College
 Arcadia University
 Assumption College
 Atlantic, College of the
 Austin College
 Babson College
 Bard College
 Barnard College
 Bates College
 Beloit College
 Bennington College

Merrimack College
 McDaniel College
 Miami University (Ohio)
 Miami, University of (Florida)
 Middlebury College
 Mills College
 Millsaps College
 Moravian College
 Morehouse College
 Mount Holyoke College
 Muhlenberg College
 Nazareth College
 New England College
 New Hampshire, University of
 New York University
 Northeastern University
 Oberlin College
 Occidental College
 Oglethorpe University
 Ohio Wesleyan University

Bentley College	Pace University
Birmingham-Southern College	Pacific, University of the
Boston College	Pitzer College
Boston University	Pomona College
Bowdoin College	Portland, University of
Bradley University	Providence College
Brandeis University	Puget Sound, University of
Bryant College	Randolph-Macon College
Bryn Mawr College	Randolph-Macon Woman's College
Bucknell University	Redlands, University of
Butler University	Reed College
California Lutheran University	Regis College (Massachusetts)
Carleton College	Regis University (Colorado)
Carnegie Mellon University	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Case Western Reserve University	Rhodes College
Centenary College of Louisiana	Rice University
Centre College	Richmond, University of
Chatham College	Ripon College
Claremont McKenna College	Rochester Institute of Technology
Clark University	Rochester, University of
Coe College	Roger Williams University
Colby College	Rollins College
Colby-Sawyer College	Saint Anselm College
Colgate University	St. Benedict, College of & St. John's Univ
Colorado College	Saint Joseph's College of Maine
Connecticut College	Saint Joseph's University
Cornell College (Iowa)	St. Lawrence University
Dallas, University of	Saint Leo University
Dartmouth College	Saint Louis University
Davidson College	Saint Mary's College of California
Delaware, University of	Saint Michael's College
Denison University	St. Norbert College
Denver, University of	St. Olaf College
DePauw University	Saint Peter's College
Dickinson College	Saint Vincent College
Dominican University of California	Salem College
Drew University	Salve Regina University
Duke University	San Francisco, University of
Earlham College	Santa Clara University
Eckerd College	Sarah Lawrence College
Elizabethtown College	Scranton, University of

Elmira College
 Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
 Emmanuel College (Massachusetts)
 Emory University
 Eugene Lang College
 Fairfield University
 Fisk University
 Florida Southern College
 Fordham University
 Franklin & Marshall College
 Furman University
 George Fox University
 George Washington University
 Gettysburg College
 Gonzaga University
 Goucher College
 Grinnell College
 Guilford College
 Gustavus Adolphus College
 Hamilton College
 Hampden-Sydney College
 Hampshire College
 Hanover College
 Hartwick College
 Harvard College
 Harvey Mudd College
 Haverford College
 Hendrix College
 Hiram College
 Hobart & William Smith Colleges
 Hofstra University
 Hollins University
 Holy Cross, College of the
 Hood College
 Ithaca College
 Johns Hopkins University
 Juniata College
 Kalamazoo College
 Kenyon College
 Knox College
 La Salle University
 Scripps College
 Seattle University
 Sewanee (University of the South)
 Simmons College
 Skidmore College
 Smith College
 Southern Maine, University of
 Southern Methodist University
 Southwestern University
 Spelman College
 Spring Hill College
 Stetson University
 Stonehill College
 Suffolk University
 Susquehanna University
 Swarthmore College
 Sweet Briar College
 Syracuse University
 TCU (Texas Christian University)
 Transylvania University
 Trinity College (Connecticut)
 Trinity University (San Antonio)
 Tufts University
 Tulane University
 Tulsa, University of
 Union College (New York)
 Ursinus College
 Ufca College of Syracuse University
 Valparaiso University
 Vanderbilt University
 Vassar College
 Vermont, University of
 Wabash College
 Wagner College
 Wake Forest University
 Washington College
 Washington University in Saint Louis
 Washington & Jefferson College
 Washington & Lee University
 Webster University
 Wellesley College

La Verne, University of
Lafayette College
Lake Forest College
Lawrence University
Le Moyne College
Lehigh University
Lewis & Clark College
Linfield College
Loyola College in Maryland
Loyola University New Orleans
Luther College
Macalester College
Maine at Farmington, University of
Maine, University of (Orono)
Manhattan College
Manhattanville College
Marietta College
Marquette University
Mary Washington College

Wells College
Wesleyan University
Westminster College (Missouri)
Westminster College (Pennsylvania)
Wheaton College (Massachusetts)
Wheelock College
Whitman College
Whittier College
Widener University
Willamette University
William & Mary, College of
William Jewell College
Williams College
Wittenberg University
Wooster, College of
WPI (Worcester Polytechnic Institute)
Xavier University (Ohio)
Yale University

