

## Introduction

This handbook has been designed as a guide for Queens High School for the Sciences at York College juniors, seniors, and their families through the college application process.

Although the college advisor is available to assist you throughout the process, you are the one who is responsible for your college search. It is important to remember to meet all deadlines, submit applications, and keep everyone informed of your progress and concerns.

We urge you to carefully read this handbook as a family and seek answers to your questions as soon as possible. Keep it handy as you begin your college application process.

You are also encouraged to visit the college section at our school website, <http://qhss.org>, for updates and announcements.

# Table of Contents

<b>Student and Parent Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>College Planning Calendar .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Types of Colleges .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>College Degree Options .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>College Application Types.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Factors to Consider in Selecting a College .</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Components of a College Application .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>College Expenses and Financial Aid .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>23</b>

# Student and Parent Responsibilities

## ***Student Responsibilities***

1. Become familiar with the college application process as early as possible in the beginning of junior year.
2. Visit the college section at the school website, <http://qhss.org>, and the college bulletin board outside room 235 periodically for announcements, updates, and SAT/ACT testing information.
3. Register for and take the SAT and/or ACT on time.
4. Search and apply for scholarships.
5. Attend College Advising Workshops and College Representative meetings.
6. Make individual college advising appointments with the college advisor.
7. Contact teachers for letters of recommendations.
8. Obtain appropriate application forms, electronic or paper, and submit applications on time.
9. Send SAT/ACT scores to all the colleges you are applying for.
10. Submit all of your acceptance and rejection letters, as well the financial aid award letters to the College Offices.
11. Inform the college advisor of which college you are planning to attend.

## ***Parent Responsibilities***

1. Discuss future plans, including the financial situations, with your son/daughter early in the selection process.
2. Be aware of deadlines (admission, scholarship and financial aid applications, etc.)
3. Complete your portion of the application (signature, payments, verification of residency, etc.)
4. Fill out financial aid forms, if you plan to file, as early as possible. Contact the college advisor if you have questions. Make an appointment if necessary.
5. Visit the college section at the school website, <http://qhss.org> and the college bulletin outside room 235 periodically for announcements, updates, and SAT/ACT testing information.
6. Make efforts to attend college advising and financial aid meetings offered at QHSSYC.
7. Check with your child periodically to provide support with the college admissions process.

# College Planning Calendar

## ***Junior Year***

### **August**

- Review your high school course work and activity plans, keeping in mind that colleges look for the following:
  - Challenging coursework
  - Strong GPA
  - Involvement in extracurricular activities such as sports, volunteer work, and involvement in your community and school
- Obtain a Social Security number (or Resident Alien ID); you will need it to apply for financial aid.
- Begin to prepare for the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude TEST (PSAT/NMSQT), which is in October. It provides great practice for the SAT; performing well on this test may qualify you to receive the National Merit Scholarship. QHSSYC will register you for this test.

### **September**

- Review your academic program and see your guidance counselor as soon as classes begin to make corrections or changes.
- Begin researching colleges and possible majors that interest you. Visit the college office to look through available resources such as college catalogs and guide books. The internet is also a great research tool.
- Attend college fairs and financial aid seminars, checking the college office bulletin board for posted events often.
- Continue preparing for the PSAT.

### **October**

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT. You will receive testing information, such as date, time, and room assignment in school.

### **December**

- Review PSAT/NMSQT score report. Identify areas in need of improvement and use this information to begin preparing for the SAT.

## January

- Review the specific testing requirements for the colleges to which you are interested in applying. Determine which exams, including the ACT, SAT, and SAT Subject Tests, that are required components of their applications, then begin to register and prepare for them.
- Visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for test dates and registration information. Testing information is also available in the college and guidance offices.

## February

- The college advisor will be making classroom presentations to help juniors become more familiar with the college process. Transcripts will be distributed.
- Research and apply for grants and scholarships to help lower your college costs. The internet is a great resource for information. Sign up for FREE scholarship matching at websites such as [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com). Scholarships and grants provide free money based on merit, talent, essays, etc. (Don't ever pay for a scholarship service.)

## March

- Review your transcript carefully, making sure that all of your high school course grades and Regents scores are accurate. If you believe that corrections need to be made, notify your Guidance Counselor as soon as possible.
- Investigate and apply for summer programs including internships, jobs, research opportunities, college courses, etc. Visit our website, [www.qhss.org](http://www.qhss.org); talk with your guidance counselor, college advisor, and teachers; and check out guidance bulletin boards for available programs.
- Be sure to register for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests if planning to take them in May and/or June. Go to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for registration and testing information. We recommend that you take the SAT in May, and Subject Tests in June at the conclusion of related courses.
- Check with the college advisor to determine eligibility for SAT and ACT fee waivers, which are determined based on incomes indicated on school lunch application forms submitted in October.

## **April**

- Attend college fairs at neighboring high schools, and visit the college office for more information.
- The ACT Plus Writing exam will be offered in June; be sure to register for this exam if you are planning to take it.

## **May**

- Take the SAT/SAT Subjects Tests that you have previously registered for.
- If you are interested in applying to a Service Academy, such as West Point, you must complete the initial application on the Service Academy's website now. You should also begin securing a nomination from your Congressperson or State Senator.
- Continue your research of colleges and possible majors of study.

## **June**

- Take the standardized tests you have previously registered for.
- Check with the college advisor, or investigate on your own, which teachers will be available to write college recommendations over the summer. Submit recommendation request forms to these teachers.

## **Summer**

- Make arrangements to visit college campuses. Try to include these visits in your summer travel plans.
- Register for the October SAT/SAT Subject Tests if you plan on taking these exams.
- Seriously investigate colleges and possible majors of study. Request information from the colleges you are interested in and review their application requirements.
- Research and apply to scholarships.
- Work on drafts for college essays. This can be the most time-consuming and challenging part of the application process. The sooner you complete it, the better!

# **Senior Year**

## **September**

- Welcome to senior year! There is a lot to do now, but if you follow this calendar and listen to the college advisor, everything will get done!
- Review your class schedule, making sure that you have been programmed for the correct courses. Submit program change requests to your guidance counselor if changes must be made.
- Make an appointment with the college advisor for your individual college planning session ASAP!
- Complete the senior survey and submit it to your guidance counselor, along with the Guidance Counselor Recommendation Request form. Please adhere to request deadline on request form.
- CAREFULLY review your transcript for accuracy! This document will be sent to colleges as part of your application packet. If corrections are necessary, see your guidance counselor.
- Submit Request for Letter or Recommendation forms to the teachers whom you would like to write your recommendations. Refer to your application requirements to determine if teachers of specific subjects are necessary. You must request all letters in writing and by the date specified on the request form. Write thank you notes to the teachers who have written you letters, to show your appreciation.
- Create an online account with The Common Application at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) Research which colleges accept the Common App. We strongly advise that you use the Common App for all eligible colleges to which you are applying.
- For colleges that do not accept the Common App, create online accounts at their own websites. Again, we strongly encourage you to apply to colleges using on-line applications.
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- If the colleges you are interested in use paper applications only, contact those schools to request applications.
- Continue working on college essays.

- Research and apply for scholarships. Check with the college advisor and scholarship bulletin board, across from room 238 for available scholarships.
- Sign up to meet college representatives. Check with the college advisor and the college office bulletin board for visitor information. You must sign up in order to receive a pass to attend sessions with representatives.
- Register for SAT/SAT Subject Tests and/or the ACT if you still have to take exams. You should take these exams no more than six weeks prior to an application deadline in order for colleges to receive your scores on time.
- Attend College Fairs, obtain passes for in-school college rep sessions from the college office.
- Become familiar with application deadlines, fees, and specific requirements including essays, recommendations, required interviews, etc.

## October

- Inform the college advisor, in person by October 1<sup>st</sup>, if you are planning to apply for Early Action (EA) or Early Decision (ED). These applications will be due to colleges on November 1<sup>st</sup> or November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- If you are applying for ED/EA, submit CSS (College Scholarship Service) Profile to colleges that require it. This is a financial aid form required by some colleges and is administered by the College Board. Go to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for information the CSS Profile.
- Make an appointment with an English teacher to review and revise your college essays.
- Request copies of paper transcripts for paper applications or scholarship applications in room 215.
- Continue meeting with the college advisor for support and application review.
- Arrange to tour the colleges you are interested in applying to, and attend college fairs and open-houses. See the college advisor for more information.

## November

- EA and ED applications are due November 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

- Continue working on regular/rolling admission applications. Regardless of the due date for individual colleges, ALL applications must be submitted by **the third week of December**. The college advisor will not be available during winter recess to review and assist you with your applications.
- If you have completed all standardized tests, visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) / [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to order score reports to be sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Scores will **not** be sent by the college advisor, this is your responsibility.

## December

- Get a head start on the financial aid process and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by creating an account at [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov). You and your parents should visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to become more acquainted with the FAFSA and the financial aid process.
- For New York State financial aid information, visit [www.hesc.com](http://www.hesc.com).
- Visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) / [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to order score reports to be sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Scores will **not** be sent by the college advisor, this is your responsibility.
- Work on CSS Profile for those colleges that require it.
- EA and ED admissions decisions should be available by mid-month. Please inform the college advisor of all admissions decisions.
- If you are accepted ED, you must withdraw all other applications at this time. See the college advisor for assistance.
- If you are accepted EA, you can choose to accept the offer and withdraw your other applications, or wait until other admission decisions have been made in the spring before making the choice of where you will be attending college.
- ALL applications must be submitted by the third week of December. The college advisor will not be available during winter recess to review and assist you with your applications.

## January

- On January 1<sup>st</sup>, or very soon after, file your FAFSA at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).
- Continue researching and applying for scholarships

## February

- There is no need to request form for Common Apps, mid-year reports will be sent on-line automatically as soon as fall term grades are available.
- Submit request forms from the colleges for all other mid-year reports.
- During President's week try to visit the campuses of the colleges you have applied to.
- Continue working on the FAFSA and CSS profile if necessary.

## March

- Visit the campuses of the colleges you have applied to.

## April

- Be on the look-out for college admission decisions. Inform the college advisor of all decisions (accepted, denied, wait-listed) as you get them.

## May

- You must accept a seat to **one**, and only **one**, college and send a deposit by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Inform the colleges that you have declined to attend of your decision promptly, so that they may offer your seat to another candidate.
- Notify the college advisor of your choice as soon as possible.

## June

- Final transcripts will be sent to colleges automatically. Submit request forms only if your college requires additional documentation and information. If your college decision has changed, you must inform the college advisor immediately so that our final transcript is sent to the correct college.

***Congratulations Graduates!***

# Types of Colleges

What kind of college would your child like to attend? Different types of colleges suit different types of people. Take a look at these descriptions to learn about the options available to your child.

## ***Liberal Arts Colleges***

Liberal arts colleges offer a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Most are private and focus mainly on undergraduate students. Classes tend to be small, and personal attention is available.

## ***Universities***

Generally, a university is bigger than a college, and offers more majors and research facilities. Class size is often a reflection of institutional size, and some classes may be taught by graduate students.

## ***Community or Junior Colleges***

Community colleges offer a degree after the completion of two years of full-time study. They frequently offer technical programs that prepare students for immediate entry into the job market.

## ***Agricultural, Technical, and Other Specialized Colleges***

Have you made a clear decision about a career after college? Specialized colleges emphasize preparation for specific careers. Examples include Art, Music, Bible, Business, Health Science, Seminary, Rabbinical, and Teaching.

## ***Public Colleges***

Public colleges are usually less expensive, particularly for in-state residents. They get most of their money from the state or local government.

## ***Private Colleges***

Private colleges rely on tuition, fees, endowments, and other private sources. Private colleges are usually smaller and can offer more personalized attention.

## ***Single-Sex***

All four-year public colleges and most private schools are co-ed. In terms of single-sex colleges, there are about 50 specifically for men and about 70 specifically for women.

## ***Religiously-Affiliated Colleges***

Some private colleges are affiliated with a religious faith. The affiliation may be historic only, or it may affect day-to-day student life.

### ***Historically Black Colleges***

Historically black colleges find their origins in the time when African American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. These schools offer students a unique opportunity to experience an educational community in which they're part of the majority.

### ***Hispanic-Serving Institutes***

There are about 135 institutions designated by the federal government as "Hispanic-Serving." At these schools, Hispanic students comprise at least 25 percent of the total full-time undergraduate enrollment.

[Source: <http://www.CollegeBoard.com>]

## College Degree Options

When students say they want to earn a "college degree," that could mean a number of things. Part of the college selection process involves thinking about exactly what kind of degree you want to earn, and which college can get you there. Here are some options to consider:

### ***Certificate or Diploma***

These non-degree offerings generally lead to employment in an occupational field. For example, to enter fields such as computer science or teaching, your child may first have to get a certificate or diploma.

### ***Associate's Degree***

Students receive an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degree after completing two years of study similar to the first two years of a four-year college. Both community colleges and four-year universities offer associate degrees. After earning an A.A. or an A.S., you may transfer to a four-year college to complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree. The Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree is awarded on completion of technological or vocational programs of study.

### ***Bachelor's or Baccalaureate Degree***

You may complete a four- or five-year, full-time program of study (or its part-time equivalent) at a college. The Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.) are the most common.

### ***First Professional Degree***

You may complete academic requirements to become licensed in a recognized profession. The programs of study require at least two years of previous college work for entrance, and at least six years of college work for completion.

### ***Combined Bachelor's/Graduate Degree (or Joint Degree)***

You may complete a bachelor's degree and a master's or first-professional degree in less than the usual amount of time. In most programs, students apply to the graduate program during their first three years of undergraduate study, and begin the graduate program in their fourth year of college. Successful completion results in awarding of both bachelor's and graduate degrees.

### ***Liberal Arts/Career Combination***

In this program of study, also known as the 3-2 Program, students typically complete three years of study in a liberal arts field, followed by two years of professional/technical study (for example, engineering). At the end of this study, you will be awarded B.A. and B.S. degrees.

[Source: <http://www.collegeboard.com>]

# College Application Types

## ***Earl-Decision and Early-Action***

If you find a college that you are sure is right for you, you should consider applying early. Early decision and early action plans allow you to apply early (usually in November) and get an admissions decision from the college well in advance of the usual spring notification date. You will know by December or January whether you have been accepted at your first-choice college.

Sometimes, students who apply under these plans have a better chance of acceptance than they would through the regular admissions process. These plans are also good for colleges, because they get students who really want to go to the school to commit early in the process.

## ***Early-Decision vs. Early-Action***

You should be aware of the differences between early decision and early action before sending in your applications. The exact rules may vary somewhat by college. Check with the college advisor to make sure you and your parents understand your rights and obligations.

Early-decision plans are binding. You agree to attend the college if it accepts you and offers an adequate financial aid package. Although you can apply to only one college for early decision, you may apply to other colleges through the regular admissions process. If you are accepted by your first-choice college early, you must withdraw all other applications. Usually, colleges insist on a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1.

Early-action plans are similar, but are not binding, unlike early-decision. If you have been accepted, you can choose to commit to the college immediately, or wait until the spring. Under these plans, you may also apply early-action to other colleges. Usually, you have until the late spring to let the college know his decision.

## ***Regular Decision***

The oldest option for applying to colleges is regular decision. It is still a viable option on which many students still rely. Regular decision applications don't extend the advantage of priority consideration, but they do allow students to apply to several colleges, and to have more time to submit their applications. The deadline for regular-decision applicants can fall anywhere between January and March.

Some colleges use "rolling admission," a policy used to admit freshmen to undergraduate programs. Under rolling-admission, you can submit your application to the college any time within a large window, sometimes without a specified end date.

[Sources: <http://www.collegeboard.com> and <http://www.scholarship.com> ]

## **Factors to Consider in Selecting a College**

Deciding where to apply can be a daunting task, considering that the U.S. boasts about 3,000 colleges. The key to narrowing down your options is to pick an initial pool of 20 to 25 colleges that interest you, and to focus your research efforts on these schools. Selecting a large pool of colleges upfront gives you the flexibility to eliminate colleges that you decide do not suit you, still leaving you with a range of colleges to which you can apply.

The key to finding a group of colleges that best match your preferences is to start early, identify the factors that are most important to you, cast a wide net, and continue to narrow down your choices based on additional information that you gather. Below are 10 factors that will help you select colleges that meet your needs. Try not to be too rigid in your preferences, as they may change as you learn more about the colleges during the search process.

### ***Geographic Location***

Some of you want to go to college far from home, while others want to stay near hometown. A strict adherence to a specific location can limit your college choices. It can be a good idea to consider some colleges outside the location that you currently prefer. Once you start learning about the colleges, your preferences may change, so it is best to keep an open mind. You may also find other factors that will take on greater importance than geography, so you do not want to eliminate a college before you consider whether it has some of the other attributes you are seeking.

### ***Enrollment***

The undergraduate enrollment at a college can range from as few as 700 students to as many as 35,000 students. When determining what size school you wish to attend, consider a range of school sizes around what you believe is the ideal size. For example, if you think that you want to attend an “intimate” college of fewer than 1,000 students where you know nearly everyone in your class, then your initial pool should probably consist of colleges with up to 5,000 students. Yet, you should also consider a few colleges in the 5,000 to 15,000 student range. Even if you are considering a large university with more class offerings and resources, you still might want to visit a few smaller colleges to confirm your decision. Upon visiting colleges and learning more about them, you may discover that you actually prefer a larger or smaller college than you previously thought.

### ***Campus Setting***

Campus environment is another factor that is important for many students. On one side of the spectrum is a college like Dartmouth in a remote setting in New Hampshire, surrounded by forests and mountains on the bank of a river. On the other side of the spectrum is New York University in the center of New York City with a campus indistinguishable from businesses, and with many bustling streets weaving between college buildings and dormitories. Visiting colleges is one of the best ways to help you decide upon the campus setting that you prefer.

## ***Public vs. Private***

U.S. colleges are either privately or publicly funded. Since public colleges are supported and operated by individual states and partially funded by state tax dollars, they generally cost less than private colleges. Attending a state college outside your home state will likely cost more than tuition at the school in your home state. In addition, enrollments and class sizes at state schools tend to be higher than those at private institutions.

Private colleges, on the other hand, are funded by tuition, fees, private gifts, corporate contributions, and endowments. Typically, this means that private colleges are more expensive than public colleges, though private colleges tend to offer more scholarships and grants. Enrollment and class sizes at private colleges tend to be smaller than those at public colleges.

## ***Religious vs. Non-Denominational***

Although most private and all public colleges are secular, some colleges are operated by a religious organization and require religious activities and courses. Other colleges may be associated with a particular religion, yet students of varying religions attend the college and practice their own religions. Secularity can be gauged by the number of lay (non-clergy) faculty and the percentage of students of other faiths attending the college.

## ***Academic Focus***

A good way to assess the academic focus of a college is to consider the most popular majors and the percentages of students in those majors. A college where most of the students major in engineering obviously has a different strength and focus than a college where most of the students major in the arts or humanities. With that said, do not eliminate a college simply because your intended major is not one of the top three as long as you understand what the college's most popular subjects are.

## ***Structured vs. Free Environment***

Each college has its own curriculum and course requirements for each major. Some colleges have strict requirements that allow for few electives. Other colleges have few requirements; they allow students the freedom to select courses and do not require a formal major. Students who feel they need more structure and guidance may favor a college with stricter requirements; conversely, students with a defined academic and career plan may favor a college that offers flexibility. Choose the environment that you feel most comfortable in.

## ***Extracurricular Activities***

Thinking about what you want to do outside of classes should also play a factor in your decision. For example, if you are a high school athlete who would like to play a varsity sport in college, you need to make a realistic evaluation of your chances of playing at the Division I, II or III level and choose colleges based on the competitiveness of the sports teams. If you are interested in participating in "Greek life," make sure the colleges you are looking at have fraternity and sorority houses; or, if you want nothing to

do with toga parties, then look for a school where Greek life is not prevalent. Do not downplay the importance of participating in extracurricular activities in college; getting involved on campus will lead to a more fulfilling collegiate experience and will be viewed positively when you look for your first job out of school.

[Source: <http://colleges.collegetoolkit.com>]

# Components of a College Application

## ***High School Student Transcript***

Because the transcript reflects your academic achievement accumulated in three years, it plays a key role in the college admissions process. When evaluating the transcripts, colleges not only are interested in grade averages, but also pay close attention to the difficulty levels and ranges of courses taken. Additionally, they look at trends in your grades. A transcript that reflects steady growth is definitely a plus! If something in your life has caused you to be less successful than you might have been, be sure to explain the reasons for this while filling out the application form.

Your transcript is available online at <https://students-qhss.theschoolsystem.net>. Your parent can view your transcript through NYC Department of Education ARIS Parent Link at <https://arisparentlink.org/parentlink>. Copies of your transcript are issued to you during your junior year; it is your responsibility to carefully read your transcript to insure that it is accurate. If there are any errors on your transcript, you must speak to your guidance counselor.

## ***Standardized Test Scores***

Currently, most colleges use College Board's SAT scores to measure a student's critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. The SAT covers three subject areas: critical reading, mathematics, and writing. Each section is worth 800 points. The exam is offered seven times a year by the College Board. You can register online and pay the necessary fees. Once registered, you can take the exam at an assigned site on the date the exam is administered.

Some use the ACT (American College Test) instead of the SAT. The ACT is more widely used in the Midwestern and Southern United States. A score of 36 on the ACT is equivalent to 2400 on the SAT.

In addition to the SAT, the College Board also offers Subject SAT exams, known as SAT II exams. Currently SAT IIs cover the following subjects: English Literature, American History, World History, Mathematics IC, Mathematics IIC, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Japanese, and Korean.

After deciding which colleges to apply to, review carefully which specific SATs each of the colleges requires. Some colleges not only ask for a certain number of SATs, but also require specific subjects.

## ***Letters of Recommendation***

Teacher recommendation letters are required in the college admissions process. Colleges normally ask you to submit at least two letters of recommendation. Some require one from a humanities teacher, and the other from a mathematics or science teacher, while others do not specify what they prefer. Generally the college admissions officers hope that the recommendation letters are not limited to describing your academic performance, but are sources for them to learn about your character and individuality. It is suggested that you start thinking about which teachers to ask for letters of recommendation as soon as you enter 11<sup>th</sup> grade. When making this decision

choose courses that you liked and in which you received relatively good grades. Also, if you to have had any dealings or relationships outside the classroom, such as coach, club advisor, consider these people for recommendations as well.

Sometimes there is no limit to how many letters of recommendation to submit. You could consider having someone special outside the school write one. Generally, if you participate regularly in any kind of extracurricular activities, such as academic competitions, church, social organizations, research, volunteer work, or employment, it's a good idea to get a letter of recommendation from one of them.

## ***Application Form***

You need to spend a great deal of time filling out the application form. Some colleges require you to use a school-specific form, and others use the Common Application. Generally, colleges that accept the Common Application will ask you to fill out a supplemental form, which makes up the missing information from the main form. The following are the components of the Common Application.

- **Applicant** – name, address, phone number, etc.
- **Future Plans** – year/term to start college, possible major, housing needs, whether you plan to apply for scholarship or financial aid, etc.
- **Demographics** – nationality, ethnicity, native language, etc.
- **Family** – information about family members, including their education and fields of work.
- **Academics** – high school information, graduation status, and college credits earned.
- **Standardized Test Scores** – SAT, ACT, SAT II, Advanced Placement Exam scores, and honors received throughout the high school years.
- **Activities** – list of extracurricular activities and employment history.
- **Writing**– one short essay and one long essay. The topic for the short essay is: Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences (150 words or fewer). The topic for the long essay can be chosen from the following list:
  - Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
  - Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
  - Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
  - Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.
  - A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.
  - Topic of your choice.
- **Additional Information**

Most of the items on the application form are lists of facts. As long as you take your time, it is not a very difficult task. The most challenging part of the application form is writing the long essays. Most 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers spend some time in class to help you write your college essays. There are books with sample essays and expert analyses available. Additionally, there are commercial services that provide advice and revision of college writings.

Students often ask what kind of essay is considered a good essay. A compelling college essay reflects an individual's true experiences or thoughts; it possesses rich vocabulary and good writing mechanics; it shows a good level of maturity; and it is one way for admissions officers to distinguish between applicants. They also state that sometimes, through reading the essays, they discover personal qualities, such as individuals who are life-long learners, kind, and willing to help others.

Overall, no matter what topic is chosen, the college essay should reveal an applicant's values, mental process, creativity, and sense of humor. The writing should also reflect persuasion, organizational abilities, and a high level of standard written English.

[Source: <https://commonapp.org>]

## ***Interview***

While some colleges invite applicants for an interview prior to receiving their applications, others conduct their interviews after initial evaluations of the applications. The rest of the colleges do not include interviewing as part of the college admissions process. Generally, an interview is not mandatory. When an applicant is invited to an interview, he/she can choose to accept or decline. However, statistically, the acceptance rate of those who were interviewed has been slightly higher than the rate of those who were not interviewed. Most Ivy League universities designate alumni all over the world to conduct interviews on behalf of the university. These interviewers then send their feedback to the admissions office.

Interviews are usually informal and their lengths vary, ranging from 15 minutes to an hour. Obviously, interview questions are determined by the interviewers. Experts suggest that applicants prepare themselves before the interview, especially answers to questions outside school life and academic achievements. The following is a list of common questions asked during college interviews.

- **Tell me about yourself** – How do you reduce your whole life to a few sentences? Try also to say something memorable here that really makes you different from other college applicants.
- **Why are you interested in our college?** – Be specific when answering this, and show that you've done your research. Highlight your intellectual interests, not your materialistic desires.
- **Who in your life has most influenced you?** – Who's your hero? What historical or fictional character would you most like to be like? Identify a few real, historical, and fictional characters you admire.
- **Why do you want to major in this field?** – If you have not decided upon a major when you apply to college, your interviewer will not be disappointed if you say you have many interests and you need to take more classes before choosing a major. However, if you have identified a potential major, be prepared to explain

why. Avoid saying that you want to major in something because you'll make a lot of money.

- **What will you contribute to our campus community?** – You'll want to be specific when answering this question. Think about what it is that makes you different from others.
- **Tell me about a challenge that you overcame.** – This question is designed to see what kind of problem-solver you are. College will be full of challenges, so the college wants to make sure they enroll students who can handle them.
- **What do you do for fun in your free time?** – College life obviously isn't all work, so the interviewers want to know if applicants will do interesting and productive things when they are not studying. Use a question such as this one to show that you are well-rounded, with a variety of interests.
- **What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?** – Very few students entering college could accurately predict their future professions. However, your interviewer does want to see that you think ahead.
- **Recommend a good book to me.** – The interviewer is trying to accomplish a few things with this question. First, the question asks whether or not you've actually read much. Second, it asks you to apply some critical skills as you articulate *why* a book is worth reading. And, finally, your interviewer might get a good book recommendation!
- **If you could do one thing in high school differently, what would it be?** – Perhaps you've always wondered if you would have enjoyed acting or music. Maybe you would have liked to give the student newspaper a try. A good answer shows that you didn't have the time in high school to explore everything that is of interest to you.

Interviewees should be ready to not only answer questions, but also to ask a few questions of their own. For example, inquiring about information about the college that is not found on the school website or in the directory or some other challenging questions can make good conversations.

[Source: <http://www.about.com>]

# College Expenses and Financial Aid

The five major components of a student's budget are: tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, personal expenses, and transportation.

Financial Aid is help for meeting the costs of your college education. The amount of financial aid you are offered may be a large factor in determining which college you attend. Be certain to talk to your parents about financial aid early in your junior year. The required applications are lengthy and it will take your parents hours to complete them. If you are applying for financial aid, your parents should try to complete their income tax return early.

With few exceptions, financial aid is based on need rather than merit. "Need" is defined as the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college (direct educational expenses, plus living expenses) and what your family can afford to contribute toward meeting those expenses as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS, where required). You and your family are expected to meet as much of the college costs as you possibly can, based on the family income and assets (e.g., savings, home equity). It is important to realize that colleges expect you to contribute a much larger percentage of your assets and last year's income than they will expect your parents to contribute.

To determine a family's expected contribution, colleges consider the following factors: income and assets (real estate and/or savings); expenses such as living costs, medical costs, and taxes; a portion of assets reserved for parents' retirement; and a sibling's college expenses.

The following are four types of Financial Aid:

1. Grants – funds awarded on the basis of need. Grants are not repaid.
2. Scholarships – funds awarded on the basis of need and achievement in a variety of areas including academics, athletics, art, leadership, or community service. These funds are not repaid.
3. Loans – money that must be repaid after graduation. Student loans have the advantage of lower interest rates than commercial loans.
4. Work – the college will provide you with an on-campus job, enabling you to earn funds towards tuition payment.

Usually you apply for financial aid after you have submitted your applications to colleges. Most colleges are "need-blind" in their acceptance of students. This means that the colleges decide whether or not to admit you before making a decision about awarding financial aid. Once you are accepted, the college will work with you and your family to create an aid package that will enable you to attend.

The FAFSA form is available in the College Office (Room 235). For some colleges and state schools, this is the only form you will be asked to complete. You may also apply online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.

You can fill out your CSS Profile online, at <http://collegeboard.com>. There is a fee for completing the profile online and a separate fee for sending the profile to each college to which you are applying.

## **Appendix**

- Guidance Counselor Letter of Recommendation Request
- Teacher Letter of Recommendation Request

**Request for Guidance Counselor Letter of Recommendation, Class of 2010**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Guidance Counselor receiving this request:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deadlines:**

Students must give this form to Guidance Counselors by:

**Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Counselors are asked to submit by hand or e-mail letters to the **College Office** by:

**Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> for Early Action/Decision**

**Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> for Regular Decision**

**\*\*Counselors, ONLY hand letters to students in sealed envelopes with your signature across the seal.**

**Applying online? YES or NO**

**Number of paper copies needed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Applying for Early Action or Early Decision? YES or NO**

I will be applying to the following schools: Please indicate ED/EA colleges first and circle appropriate distinction.

- |           |                             |          |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| 1. _____  | Application deadline: _____ | ED or EA |
| 2. _____  | Application deadline: _____ | ED or EA |
| 3. _____  | Application deadline: _____ | ED or EA |
| 4. _____  | Application deadline: _____ |          |
| 5. _____  | Application deadline: _____ |          |
| 6. _____  | Application deadline: _____ |          |
| 7. _____  | Application deadline: _____ |          |
| 8. _____  | Application deadline: _____ |          |
| 9. _____  | Application deadline: _____ |          |
| 10. _____ | Application deadline: _____ |          |

**Indicate more colleges on reverse side**

Is there anything else, not stated on your Senior Survey, that you would like to be included in your recommendation?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Request for Teacher Letter of Recommendation, Class of 2010**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher receiving this request:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to Teacher:** Write about your experiences with this student in and outside of the classroom, and how his/her outside activities or intended major/career choice relate to your classes. All letters must be written on school stationary. If you do not have QHSSYC school letterhead saved, inform Ms. Bruno-lacono, who will e-mail it to you. Please be sure to save completed recommendations on your computer, thumb drive, etc. as most students will be filing college applications on-line and you will have to submit your letter electronically. Also, please e-mail Ms. Bruno-lacono your letter at: [Liacono@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:Liacono@schools.nyc.gov). If a student is applying by mail, he or she **MUST** provide you with an envelope for each paper copy requested. Do not give letters to students unless in a signed, sealed envelope!

**Deadlines:**

Students must give this form to teachers by:

**Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Teachers are asked to submit by hand or e-mail letters to the **College Office** by:

**Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup> for Early Action/Decision**

**Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup> for Regular Decision**

**\*\*Teachers, ONLY hand letters to students in sealed envelopes with your signature across the seal.**

**Applying on line? YES or NO**                      **Number of paper copies needed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Applying Early Action/Decision? YES or NO**

List the classes taught by or activity supervised by the teacher indicated above:

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_ Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

1. List the most interesting aspects of the class(es) you took with this teacher, and/or any special projects you did for this class. Give details.

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2. List any significant events that happened in the class(es) you have taken with the teacher listed above.

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3. List extracurricular activities relevant to the classes you have taken with this teacher.

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4. What would you like to study in college, and why?

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5. Is there any other academic or personal information that you think that colleges should know about you that you would like your teacher to share?

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Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_