



College Handbook

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Foreword

The following information is an overview of the college application process, in which I address some of the questions that have come up during college meetings over the years. It draws from multiple sources, including a wealth of available reference materials, personal experience, interactions with college admissions officers, internet searches, best practices, and feedback from students, teachers, and parents. It is by no means exhaustive, but my hope is that the information below will serve as a helpful starting point for the college application process. As always, I am available to work with you individually to help you on your path of finding a field of study, reviewing different colleges and making sure that you submit the strongest application possible to the colleges you are interested in attending.

Getting Started...

One of the questions that many families ask is: “When should I start the process of applying to college?” For most students, the formal application process will begin in their junior year of high school. However, there are some things that you can and should be doing during your freshman and sophomore years of high school, because in their decision process, colleges look at the grades of 9th through 12th grade. Therefore, starting in 9th and 10th grade, you should focus on earning the strongest grades possible and finding and investing in some extracurricular activities that you love.

Volunteer! While all colleges desire students who have shown that they have devoted time and effort to volunteering or service, admission officers want these activities to reflect genuine interest. Colleges can tell when community service is being done more for the sake of fulfilling a school requirement or in an attempt to look good on the application or whether they are being done out of a genuine interest. A student’s level of involvement, evidence of leadership, and recommendations will truthfully reflect an applicant’s motivation. Find activities that motivate and excite you – take some time to figure out who you are. Extracurricular activities, however, should never compromise your academic work. Your academic record is still the most important part of your application.

Get to know your high school counselor. You and your counselor will be working together during the application process and in order for the counselor to successfully advise you and write a compelling letter of recommendation, it is essential that your counselor gets to know you. Make an appointment and/or drop in periodically to talk and keep the counselor informed about what is going on in your life. It is your responsibility to cultivate this relationship, so that when the time comes, the counselor can be your advocate.

CREATING YOUR LIST OF COLLEGES

Students who are beginning the process of the college search often ask themselves: where do I start? The simple answer to this question is: at the beginning. This means creating a list of colleges that fits your needs. Is there a magic number of schools for this list? No. What you should aim for is a list that is realistic and appropriate. Very often, students will sort their potential colleges into three categories.

“*Reach*” colleges are colleges where most of the student body has slightly better academic credentials than you have. You are by no means a likely admit at a reach college, but you are in striking distance.

“*Fit*” colleges are colleges where most of the student body has similar academic credentials to yours and you have a reasonable chance of admission.

“*Safety*” colleges are colleges where admission is a certainty for you. They are often large colleges, and usually colleges where your academic credentials are superior to those of most of the student body. However, each safety college should still be a college at which you would be as happy to enroll as you would at one of your fit colleges.

Before you start creating a college list, you need to take some time to get to know yourself. Self-reflection is a key component of a comprehensive approach to finding your college. You need to look inside yourself before you start looking outside. In essence, the better you know yourself, the greater the chance that you will find a college that will allow you to thrive. By asking the following questions, you can help narrow down the possibilities and find schools that are a good fit for you.

1. Getting to know you:

- What inspires you?
- What is something that sets you apart from others?
- What are your preferences, priorities, interests, and hopes?
- What are the first words that come to mind when you are asked to describe yourself?
- What can you say about yourself that is only true for you?
- What frustrates you?
- What makes you happy?

2. Which school meets your needs and wants best?

- *Location*: Do you want to stay close to home or experience a part of the country or the world that you’ve never experienced.
- *Setting*: Do you want a school with an urban, suburban, or rural setting?
- *Size*: School enrollments can range from a few hundred students to tens of thousands. In which environment do you feel most comfortable?
- *Academic programs*: Does the school offer a major in the subject you are interested in? Does the school have a core or an open curriculum? Are classes large lectures or small seminars? Are introductory courses taught by faculty or graduate students?
- *Cost*: If cost is a concern for your family, keep it in mind as you look at schools. Include colleges with a range of price points and financial aid.

- *Ethnicity and Race*: Are you looking for a school with a large international population? Do you like a school with a diverse student population?
- *Legacy*: Are you applying as a legacy student (your mother, father, or both parents have completed their studies at the same college to which you are applying)?

3. Which school gives you a chance to participate in activities that are meaningful to you?

- Do you want to be at a school with NCAA Division I athletics?
- Are you interested in music, art, theater, comedy?
- What kind of volunteer or public service opportunities are there?
- Are you interested in joining a sorority or fraternity?
- Do you want to write for a student publication?

As you work through these questions, certain priorities will emerge, that will help you find the best fit for you. Thoughts and feelings from friends and family are also very important. Throughout this whole process, keep in mind that there is more than one great school out there for you. Who you are and what you want will most likely change, so don't be surprised if you find several good fit schools.

IMPORTANT SEARCH CRITERIA

As you are searching for your schools, there are some important characteristics of colleges that you should take into account. Some of them will be familiar since they are part of your self-reflection above. These factors include:

- Graduation requirements
- Policies on declaring a major
- Core or open curriculum
- Requirements of individual departments

What are some types of colleges? **Public colleges** are funded by local and state governments and usually offer lower tuition rates than private colleges, especially for students who are residents of the state where a college is located. **Private colleges** rely mainly on tuition, fees and private sources of funding. Private donations can sometimes provide generous financial aid packages for students. **Four-year colleges** offer four-year programs that lead to a bachelor's degree. These include universities and liberal arts colleges. **Two-year colleges** offer programs that last up to two years that lead to a certificate or an associate degree. These include community colleges, vocational-technical colleges and career colleges.

Universities often are larger and offer more majors and degree options—bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees—than colleges. Most universities contain several smaller colleges, such as

colleges of liberal arts, engineering or health sciences. These colleges can prepare you for a variety of careers or for graduate study.

Liberal Arts Colleges

Liberal Arts colleges offer a broad base of courses in the liberal arts, which includes areas such as literature, history, languages, mathematics and life sciences. Most are private and offer four-year programs that lead to a bachelor's degree. These schools can prepare you for a variety of careers or for graduate study.

Liberal Arts colleges tend to be smaller. Below are examples of liberal arts colleges.

- Examples of Public, state colleges are:
 - St. Mary's College, Maryland
 - Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
 - New College of Florida
 - University of North Carolina – Asheville

- Examples of private colleges are:
 - Swarthmore College
 - Haverford College
 - Middlebury College
 - Claremont McKenna College
 - Bryn Mawr College
 - Franklin and Marshall College
 - Boston College

Universities

There are two types of universities. Both include liberal arts components in addition to specific areas of study, i.e engineering. They are divided into public and private universities.

- Examples of public, state universities are:
 - University of Maryland
 - University of California
 - Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
 - University of Alabama
 - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 - University of Virginia
 - James Madison University

- Examples of private universities are:
 - Duke University
 - Carnegie Mellon University
 - Columbia University
 - Georgetown University
 - Tufts University
 - Rice University
 - Brandeis University

Finally, there are specialty institutions. These can be either private or public. Examples of such specialty institutions are:

- Conservatories and Fine Arts Institutes
 - Cooper Union School of Arts
 - Rhode Island School of Design
 - Pratt Institute of Art and Design
 - Julliard School
 - Oberlin Conservatory of Music
 - University of Maryland School of Music
- Technical Schools
 - Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
 - California Institute of Technology
 - Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 - University of Michigan – Ann Arbor
- Military and Service Academies
 - The Citadel
 - Texas A & M University
 - U.S. Naval Academy

The Size of the Institution

As you may recall, your preference as to the size of a university or college was one of the questions you asked yourself as part of the self-reflection exercise. The university or college you ultimately select will almost certainly be larger than the German School, but there are still significant differences in the sizes of schools.

Small (2,000 undergraduates or less)

Swarthmore College
Williams College
Hillsdale College

Harvey Mudd College
Bucknell University
Trinity College

Dickinson University
William and Mary Univ.
Wesleyan University

Medium (10,000 undergraduates or less)

Carnegie Mellon University	Carleton College	Georgetown University
Duke University	Columbia University	Princeton University
Dickinson University	Hofstra University	Loyola University

Large (20,000 undergraduates or less)

Appalachian State University	Clemson University	Drexel University
George Mason University	McGill University	University of Pittsburgh
New York University	UNC Chapel Hill	University of Virginia

Very large (30,000 undergraduates or less)

Virginia Tech	University of Maryland: College Park	Colorado State
University of Oklahoma	University of California: Los Angeles	University of Arizona
East Carolina University	Miami University (Ohio)	University of Georgia

Extremely Large (more than 30,000 undergraduates)

University of Central Florida	Texas A & M University	Ohio State University
Pennsylvania State University	University of Texas at Austin	Florida International U.
Arizona State University	Michigan State University	

Location, Location, Location

Even if you do not yet know exactly which college or university you would like to attend, chances are that you prefer to go to a college or university in a certain part of the country. This should be taken into consideration when forming a potential list of colleges. If you prefer being in a big city or a suburban campus, it should be reflected in your list of colleges. If you are interested in internship and job opportunities in specific industries, include colleges that are in a geographical area that will offer such opportunities. For example: If you would like to go into film, you might consider a college around Los Angeles; if you are interested in the financial services industry, colleges in New York may be of interest to you.

Think about how far away from home you would like to be. Do you want to be able to come home on weekends to do laundry or get a home-cooked meal? Does the thought of spending four years in a completely different part of the country or the world appeal to you? How do you feel about studying in a different time zone and coming home less frequently – maybe only for holidays? Be honest with yourself on how your choice of college will impact your lifestyle. Can you spend several months without going to see the latest “must see” concert? Are you attached to your flip-flops and sun glasses and can’t see yourself wearing a wool sweater? Can you picture your college covered in snow most of the winter? Do you need the option of getting outside and riding your bike down a nature trail? Can you live without

your car? Can you be happy if there is no shopping mall close by? Would you mind not being able to hang out at the latest downtown hot spot or trying the newest restaurant that just opened? These may seem like trivial things, but they will all play a role in your college selection.

Keep an open mind as you are narrowing down your list. Stop and think about which images come to mind when you hear the words “rural” or “country”. As you take your college trips to visit potential schools, compare your preconceptions to reality when on campus, and remember your list of priorities.

Inside the Campus Culture

As you are exploring prospective schools, try to get a “feel” for the campus.

- What is the social climate?
- What do other students share about the school?
- What type of people do you encounter on the quad?
- What is important to the people at the school – what are their values?
- Do most students live on or off campus?
- How important is reputation and prestige of the school to you?
- How diverse is the student body?
- Is the school known for being a party school?
- Is the library busy on a Friday night?
- Is the school culture dominated by the Greek system?

There may not be simple answers to these questions, and these are not the only questions worth asking yourself during your visit. You will undoubtedly find out things that were not even on your list. Hopefully, the questions will at least help you make a more thorough evaluation of your prospective school. In the end, the extent to which you are comfortable with what you have learned is the most important thing.

Pricetag

For many students, cost is a major factor in applying for colleges. For each college you apply to, estimate how much it will cost you to attend. Don’t forget that aside from tuition and other fees, housing, meals, travel, textbooks and miscellaneous expenses will need to be factored into the total cost.

If cost is a concern for your family, keep it in mind as you look at schools. But if you are a student with good grades and test scores, don’t rule out schools at this point because of cost alone.

If cost is a major factor for you, you may want to consider applying to schools in your state. In-state tuition rates are often lower, either because state universities charge lower tuition to in-state students, or have grant and scholarship programs that students can use at any state college, private or public. In any event, as a college education is a major investment, the application process gives you a good

opportunity to sit down as a family and have a discussion about the financial parameters that play a factor in choosing prospective schools.

GUIDEBOOK AND REFERENCES

Once you have reflected on your priorities, preferences, and other points of reference, you are ready to create a list of colleges that you will be researching. Luckily, there are plenty of resources available to help you with your search! You can use both primary and secondary resources for your search.

Primary sources:

- College Websites
- College conferences (National Association for College Admission Counseling conferences or online college conferences or regional conferences)
- Networking with current students, teachers, counselors
- College Visits
- Informational material such as catalogs and flyers that give an overview of colleges

Secondary Sources:

- *College Handbook*, published by the College Board
- *Book of Majors*, published by the College Board
- *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, by Edward B. Fiske
- *The Best 377 Colleges*, published by Princeton Review
- www.unigo.com – for college reviews, videos on photos
- www.fastweb.com – for scholarship searches
- www.collegeboard.org – testing information, college searches, general information
- www.ucas.com – guide to getting into University and College for the UK
- <http://talk.collegeconfidential.com/alphabetic-list-colleges>
- <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges>

TAKING STANDARDIZED TESTS

Standardized testing, whether you are taking the PSAT, ACT, SAT or the SAT Subject tests, has become one of the most anxiety-provoking, stress-inducing and sometimes frustrating pieces of the college admissions process. Millions of students take these tests every year because many colleges require standardized test scores as a partial predictor of student success in their freshman year of college. It is an important piece of information, but in most cases a test score alone will not get a student in or keep a student out of college. It is important to remember that some universities and colleges make these tests optional, and some don't use them at all. Keep this in mind as you are searching for your prospective schools: there is a college out there for everyone.

THE PSAT

Every October, German School students take the PSAT. Most of our students will take it in the fall of their junior year, but we also offer it as a practice test to students in their sophomore year. The new PSAT test is 2 hours and 45 minutes long and has three components: Reading, Writing and Language, and Math. The test is rights-only scoring, meaning that there is no penalty for guessing. Because of this, a student's raw score for both of the main test areas is the number of questions answered correctly. Raw scores are then converted to scaled scores ranging between 160 and 760 (760 is the highest possible score for each section). The raw scores are added together for the total PSAT score, or Selection Index, which ranges between 320 and 1520. Unlike the SAT, the PSAT does not contain a scored essay portion. GISW students register through the counselor and the test is administered at the German International School. Scores from the PSAT will not be reported to colleges and they are not used for admission. Scores from the PSAT can be used as tools to help you learn where your testing strengths are, and which areas may need improvement.

The PSAT in eleventh grade is also the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST). Scores from the test are used to qualify students for programs such as the National Merit Scholarship competition, the National Achievement Scholarship Program, and the National Hispanic Recognition Program. A student's "Selection Index" (double the sum of the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math scores) will determine a student's status. There are four levels of recognition: Commended Student, Semifinalist, Finalist, and Merit Scholar Designee.

THE SAT

The SAT has been around since the mid-1920's and is used as an important tool in the college application process. The SAT used to stand for "Scholastic Aptitude Test" – now it is simply referred to as "the SAT". The exam is created and administered by College Board, and the new format of the SAT, which was introduced in the Spring of 2016, tests students' ability to apply what they have learned in school in three areas: evidenced-based reading and writing, mathematics and an optional essay. Students have 3 hours (+ 50 minutes with the optional essay) to complete the exam. There is no penalty for incorrect answers. Students receive one total score on a scale ranging from 400-1600, that is the sum of two sections. They will also receive several other sub-scores, and section scores. More detailed information can be found at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/inside-the-test/compare-old-new-specifications>. The exam is offered seven times a year: January, March, May, June, October, November and December. Students of the German International School sign up to take the test online (www.collegeboard.org) at participating high schools in their area. Please also check this website for registration dates and fees. Most students will take the SAT for the first time in March or May of their junior year.

Evidence-Based Reading and Writing: This section includes a reading test and a Writing and Language test. There are 65 minutes allotted for the Reading and 35 minutes allotted for the Writing and Language test. The Reading Test measures comprehension and reasoning skills. The Writing and Language Test assesses skills in revising and editing to improve expression ideas and to correct errors in grammar, usage, and punctuation.

Math: There are two sections, one of which is 25 minutes and does not allow for use of calculator and one that is 55 minutes long and allows use of calculator. Skills covered include algebra, data analysis, trigonometry, geometry and pre-calculus.

Essay (optional): Students are asked to read and analyze an argument (600-700 words) and write an effective response. They will need to understand the techniques the author used to write persuasively. The time allotted is 50 minutes. Two different people will read and score the essay. Each scorer awards 1–4 points for each dimension: reading, analysis, and writing. The two scores for each dimension are added. Students receive three scores for the SAT Essay — one for each dimension — ranging from 2–8 points.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS

In addition to the SAT, students applying to colleges and universities may also be required to take one or more SAT Subject Tests. The SAT Subject Tests are offered several times a year in 20 different subjects such as World History, Spanish, German, Math (Levels I and II), Biology, Chemistry. Be sure to pick the subjects you will score best on, since colleges that require SAT Subject Tests typically only take the two or three highest scores.

Subject tests are shorter than the SAT and are easier to prepare for. They are also much shorter – only one hour each. You may take more than one in a day. Like the SAT, SAT Subjects tests are score out of a possible 800 points. Colleges you are applying to may require more than one test, but not more than three. Keep in mind that this may also change should colleges modify their requirements for admission following the changes to the SAT.

THE ACT

The ACT – American College Test – is a second widely-used standardized college admissions exam. It was first used in 1959 as a statewide testing program for Iowa high school students. Developed by a University of Iowa statistician, the ACT is not an IQ or aptitude test like the SAT. The questions on the ACT are closely tied to classroom content and based on the material taught in grades 7-12. The ACT is administered six times a year: September, October, December, February, April and June. It has four parts – English, Math, Reading and Science and is three hours and 25 minutes long. There is one 45-minute English section with 75 multiple choice questions; one 60-minute Math Section with 60 multiple choice questions; one 35-minute Reading section with 40 multiple choice questions; one 35-minute

Science section with 40 multiple choice questions; and one 30-minute Essay (optional). The English section tests your knowledge of grammar, sentence structure and punctuation. The Math section includes questions on Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, and some elementary trigonometry. The Reading section tests reading comprehension, and the Science section tests scientific reasoning (everything you will need to answer questions will be presented in graphs, charts, tables, and brief descriptions of experiments).

The writing section (optional) of the ACT is very similar to the essay portion of the SAT. You will have 30 minutes to write a persuasive essay in response to a prompt. The essay will be read by two readers who will assign a score of 1 – 6, and the two will be totaled for a final score between 2 to 12.

Each section of the ACT is scored from 1 to 36, and the Composite Score is the average of the four individual test scores. A perfect composite score on the ACT is 36. Students will register for the ACT at www.actstudent.org

COLLEGE VISITS

What is the purpose of a college visit?

The college road trip offers students the chance to experience a prospective college first hand. Basically, it offers you a chance to experience what it would be like to attend a school – walk through the classrooms, eat in the dining hall, meet students and faculty, and get a feel for a school’s “vibe.” Although there is a wealth of information on a school online and in books, there is no substitute for firsthand observation to help you fine-tune your list of prospective schools.

Formal or informal college visits?

Campus visits can be either formal or informal. **Formal** information sessions are usually coordinated by the university admissions offices, and can include group information sessions, which give you an overview of the college, including the school’s history, academic programs, the application process, undergraduate life and financial aid information. A walking tour, led by students, of the college may follow the information session. Sometimes, you will have the chance to make an overnight visit, staying with current students in the dorm, trying out the dining hall, attending some classes, and sitting for an interview (if the school offers these). These opportunities may only be available during certain times of the school year and may require you to sign up in advance.

In addition to general campus tours, some schools also offer events that are tailored for students who meet specific criteria, such as students who are studying specific subjects, such as the sciences or engineering, or for students of a particular background, such as first-generation college students, students of color or international students. Refer to the colleges’ websites to learn about special programs, and get yourself on the colleges’ mailing lists so that you are sent invitations to programs that are appropriate for you.

First-time visits do not have to be “official”, however. They can be **informal** as well. If you are near a college while on vacation, add a visit to your itinerary. Stop by the admission office and pick up some

information on the college and let them know that you are visiting. Remember that visits to any campus, even if you are not necessarily interested in applying to that particular school, can help you zero in on what's important to you. Keep a written account of your visits, so you can remember later what about each college appealed to you or what you disliked. Although you do not need to visit every school on your list, you should visit enough schools to get a good feel for college life at each of the different types of colleges on your list. Try to include, as appropriate, rural and suburban, large research and small liberal arts campuses as well as public and private schools.

When should college visits be scheduled?

Most students will begin making official visits to colleges in the spring of their junior year or the summer before senior year of high school. You may also wish to do a follow-up visit at schools that were particularly interesting to you. These are usually done in the fall of senior year. These visits sometimes help a student make up their minds about applying to a school via a binding early decision application. Keep in mind that there are usually a limited number of these opportunities, so plan ahead. Information on scheduling a visit and lots more can be found on the colleges' website.

The German International School Washington D.C. encourages students to make use of their vacation time for college visits whenever possible, in order to limit the amount of class time they miss. Please remember to follow appropriate procedures if you are asking to be excused from classes.

You may also enjoy a spur-of-the-moment visit to a college campus to attend a sporting event, or theater performance, maybe browse a college bookstore or have lunch at the campus union. If you happen to be driving through a college town or live near a college campus, such a spontaneous visit can also be very enriching.

Where should you visit?

If the process of scheduling visits to colleges is a daunting one, students can "practice" with visits to local colleges. Fortunately, there are many different types of institutions all fairly close to the German International School. Some examples include:

- The University of Maryland: College Park
- American University
- Georgetown University
- George Washington University
- Catholic University
- Howard University
- University of Virginia
- St. Mary's College, Maryland
- And more...

Whatever college you decide to visit, whenever you decide to go, and whatever experience you have, spending the time and money to give yourself the chance to conduct some in-person research on a school is invaluable. It can be critical to the decision-making process, because it is more helpful than any

guidebook or website. Sometimes, you might even be asked to write an essay on why you want to attend a certain college. Having been there in person makes answering this question much easier.

The college visit may also have a bearing on the decision that is reached by a college when reviewing your application. It is called “expression of interest”. At some schools expressing interest in a university can often prove essential to gaining admission to that university. Expressing interest in a school can include attending an information session or college fair, signing up for the school’s website, or scheduling an optional interview. Call the admissions office if you are not sure if the college factors in a student’s expression of interest in their final decision.

On Campus

Once you are on campus, pay attention to your surroundings. You are possibly going to be spending several years of your life here, so your impressions of the dorms, the library, the dining hall, the student union, the gym, the science labs, the other students, and the surrounding community are all important pieces of the puzzle. Basically, your job on a college visit is to speak to as many people as possible in order to get your questions answered from a range of perspectives in order to determine whether the school is a place where you can see yourself. Don’t forget to listen carefully to the admissions officer talking about values, programs, and priorities as well as to the students you speak to in the dining hall. Are they both telling you the same things, or do their stories differ?

Below are a few good questions to ask that will help you gather information.

Questions for Admission Officers:

- How would you describe the typical student here?
- What impresses you the most in a student’s application?
- What are you looking for when you read a student’s essay?
- How does the school help freshman adjust to college?
- How are roommates assigned?
- Are admission decisions need-blind?
- Is demonstrated interest a factor in your admission decision?
- What kind of student does well here?
- What kind of student does not do well here?
- How is academic advising handled?
- How does the meal plan work?
- Who teaches lecture classes? Who teaches lab sections? Can you get individual help from professors?

Questions for Tour Guides:

- *Why did you decide to go to school here?*
- *What is the typical student like?*
- *What are the traditions that students at this school care about?*
- *What do students do for fun on the weekend?*
- *What are the most popular extra-curricular activities here?*

- *How do you spend time with faculty outside the classroom?*
- *How are safety concerns addressed on and off campus? Are there police patrols, student escorts, emergency phones available?*
- *Do students stay on campus or get involved in activities in the surrounding areas?*
- *How is the food?*
- *Are there differences in residence halls? What percent of students live there? Will I need a car?*
- *Is the library a good place to work and study? Is it easy to get online?*
- *What do you like best/least about going to school here?*

DOCUMENT YOUR VISITS! You will most likely gather so much information that by the end of a few visits, you may find that it all starts to be a bit of a blur. You may think you will remember specific details about each school, like which school had the best food, the most up-to-date labs, or the most impressive volleyball team, but you can be sure that it will be difficult to remember details after a few weeks. Begin evaluating the school while the visit is still fresh in your mind. What did you like and why? Did you have any doubts about a school and why? If you are excited about the thought of attending a certain school, try and remember what information made you feel this way.

It might be helpful to bring along a camera to take pictures of each visit. These days, it is easy to take pictures, videos, etc. with your phone, which most of us carry with us anyway. If you like making lists, create one of the characteristics of each school that are priorities for you. You may also wish to collect any business cards and email addresses you get from admissions offices, students, financial aid offices, and any faculty or coaches that you meet. Whatever works for you - do it the day you are on campus. You will be glad later!

COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

Although not every college offers interviews, and they may be a relatively small part of the whole college search and application process, they present a great chance for an admissions officer to get to know you better, and for you to get to know the college better as well. The general rule is that the smaller the college, the more important the interview is going to be. Keep in mind that whether or not the interview is a factor in the ultimate decision of the college, learning how to prepare for an interview is an important life skill and should be taken seriously. It is the student's responsibility to organize the interview, if this option is offered.

Interviews fall into two categories: 1) The Informational Interview and 2) The Evaluative Interview

The Informational Interview:

In the informational interview, the primary goal is for the college to showcase their school to a prospective student - basically they are recruiting. They are usually conducted by local alums who volunteer to help their alma mater get new students excited about enrolling. It also gives you the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about a college. Your performance in this type of interview

is not a factor in admission to the college. Although notes are not usually kept from this type of interview, the fact that you participated in one may become part of your file.

The Evaluative Interview:

In the evaluative interview, you are being assessed on your performance. In this type of interview, the interviewer makes it clear that the results of the interview will become part of your admissions file. The interviewer will most likely ask most of the questions, which can cover a variety of topics from current events to a student's favorite sport, and is designed to help the admissions officer get a glimpse of who you are as a person. The interviewer will write a report or will give his/her evaluation of you to the admissions committee, and it will be a factor in evaluating your chances for admission. Although it is an evaluative interview, you will still have the chance to ask questions, and you should prepare a few good ones that demonstrate your knowledge of and an interest in the college.

When should you interview?

Interviews can take a little practice. You may want to schedule at least one interview in the spring of your junior year in high school. It may be a good idea to participate in a few interviews before you interview for your first-choice college. Most of the time, students will schedule their most important interviews for the summer before or early in their senior year. Some colleges prefer to wait until you have submitted your application before offering you the opportunity to interview. You should check the websites of the schools you are interested in to learn about their interview process for prospective students, as each college has its own policy. *You will be responsible for setting up interviews on-site at the college or with visiting admissions representatives.* To help keep you organized, you may want to make a list of those colleges that offer interviews and when they are scheduled. If you are planning a road trip to visit colleges, take this information into account so you can make appointments accordingly.

Where do the interviews take place?

Interviews can take place at the college in the college admissions office with an admissions representative or a current student volunteer who has been trained how to conduct these interviews. They may also take place off-campus at a hotel, a private home, at the GISW or a coffee shop. Off-campus interviews are generally conducted by volunteer alumni. The interview will be given the same weight in the admission consideration regardless of who conducts it.

Preparing for the Interview:

Students should take some time to prepare for each interview. Spend some time researching the college's website and formulating five or six questions that are not already answered on the website. Try and refine your questions in order to demonstrate an interest in the academic life of the college you are interviewing for. Perhaps instead of asking "Are Freshman allowed to bring a vehicle on campus?" you could ask the interviewer to explain how the parking and transportation system works.

At the Interview:

Timing and Dress:

Make it a point to be on time. You may want to arrive at an admissions office a few minutes early to check in and to have some extra time in case you need to fill out forms before you go into the interview.

When the interviewer arrives, be sure to stand up and shake the interviewer's hand. Look the interviewer in the eye as you introduce everyone in your party. **FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE IMPORTANT.** The interviewer will then let everyone know how the interview will proceed.

If the interview is taking place at a private residence, it is not a good idea to arrive early – just be there for your scheduled time. Also be sure that you are picked up from the interview on time (most interviews take about 45 minutes plus or minus 15 minutes unless you have been told otherwise at the outset of the meeting).

This may seem obvious, but dress appropriately for the occasion. Although you do not need to dress up for the interview, you should not wear jeans, shorts, sneakers, flip flops, tank tops, or spaghetti straps. Body language at the interview is also extremely important. Remember to sit up in your chair and make eye contact with the interviewer, and smile. If you have brought your cell phone to the interview, make sure it is turned off, so it will not buzz or ring during the interview.

Interview questions:

The interviewer will be the one to ask the first question. This is the proper protocol, so you should wait for him/her to begin. Most likely, the opening question will be very general and is meant to get the conversation started. The interviewer may ask questions about your experiences in high school. Answer positively, and be sure that you do not put down the administration, the teachers, or other schools. Do not use the interview to complain about all the things you have found to be unfair during high school. As the interview progresses, the questions will be more in depth and will require you to put more thought into your answers. Questions at this point may often be "why" or "what" questions. "Why are you interested in this college?"; "What activities in high school were particularly meaningful to you and why?"; "What is your favorite subject and why?"; "What are some of the things that you are really excited about when you think about college?"; "What current event is most interesting to you and why?" Think about how you would answer such questions in advance. This might help you feel prepared and calm as you enter the interview.

Be prepared to ask the interviewer some questions as well. Remember, the interview is a chance for you to learn about the college. You may write these questions down on a note card if you need to and bring it with you. You should be asking questions that truly interest you. After all, you may choose to attend this school, so take advantage of the opportunity to find out something that is not on the website or in the brochure. Questions like: "What kind of students are successful at this college?"; "How would you describe the personality of this college?"; or "What kind of opportunities set this college apart from others?"

COLLEGE INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What is the most important thing you've learned in high school?
2. Why did you choose to attend the German International School Washington D.C.?
3. How does attending GISW influence your choice of college?
4. What is your favorite subject and why?
5. What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?
6. How do you define "success?"
7. What have you liked or disliked about your school? What would you change?

8. What is your favorite extracurricular experience and why?
9. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
10. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
11. Who is a role model for you?
12. What has been your proudest achievement so far?
13. If you could talk with any living (or deceased) person, who would it be and why?
14. What events have been crucial in your life?
15. What mark do you feel you've left on your school?
16. Why do you want to attend this college?
17. What do you want to get out of your college experience?
18. What about you is unique?
19. What could you contribute to our college community?
20. What questions about this college can I answer for you?

After the interview:

The interviewer will signal when the interview is ended, usually by asking something like: "Do you have any last questions?" Once the interview is over, shake hands again, look the interviewer in the eye and thank them for their time. Be sure that you have the interviewer's contact information, so that you can send a short thank-you note. This is basic good manners and your note may also become part of your student file. A handwritten note is nice, but an email is also acceptable. The smaller the college is, the more importance this gesture can have, since the interviewer is more likely to remember you and appreciate this extra effort.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION FORMS

Depending on which colleges you have decided to apply to, you will follow one of the following application processes and timelines:

Nonrestrictive Plans: There are no conditions placed on students if they apply under these plans.

Regular Decision (RD):

Typically, the deadlines for submitting an RD application run from December through March and students are informed of decisions around April 1. The outcomes for RD will either be acceptance, denial or waitlist. The National Candidates Reply Date is May 1, and accepted students must respond to the college they will be attending by that date.

Rolling Admission (RA):

Schools offering rolling admission do not offer one set deadline for submitting your application. RA applications are reviewed as they are submitted, and you may have your answer either a few weeks later (typically six-eight weeks) or on one of several specified dates. You should check each college's website for details. As with RD applications, accepted students usually have until May 1 to let the college know if they will be attending. Since schools offering RA fill spaces as application decisions are

made, it is possible that applications that are submitted later may be denied. You should therefore try to apply as early as possible. Also, your application date may influence other aspects of your college experience, such as access to housing, financial aid, and scholarships. Visiting the college website will help you determine the best time to send in your material.

Early Action (EA):

Students who are applying EA will submit their application by an early deadline and will receive an answer from the college by an early date. If you are applying EA, you may also apply to other schools on your list, but should research any specific requirements that your colleges have. Under EA you can be either accepted, denied, or deferred and placed in the regular application pool. If you are deferred, you should send any updated information to the college (i.e. higher SAT/ACT scores, new Subject Test scores, or any type of significant academic or extracurricular accomplishment the college has not seen yet). You may also receive a note from the college specifically outlining the information which they would like to receive.

Restrictive Plans: Conditions are placed on students either committing them to enroll if accepted or restricting them from applying to other schools.

Early Decision (ED):

Early Decision plans are binding. You should consider applying ED if you have a clear first-choice college, which you are committing to attend if you are accepted. You may only apply ED to one college, and you and your parents and counselor must sign a contract that you will attend this school if admitted. Deadlines for submitting your application are usually in November and you will be informed of the college's decision by December. You can be either accepted, denied or deferred. If you are accepted, you must immediately withdraw any other applications you may have sent to other schools. If you are deferred, your application will automatically be added to the regular application pool. You should be pro-active and update you application with any new test scores, grades, activities, honors, etc. Also, you should send an email demonstrating your continued interest in attending the college. If you are denied in ED you will not be reconsidered. Try not to be too upset at this rejection and think of it as a strong hint that you should put your efforts into the other great schools on your list.

Restrictive Early Action (REA):

Restrictive early action, although non-binding, does expect you to apply to only one school under REA. You may apply to other schools under RD or rolling admission, but may not apply to any other schools under EA, ED, or REA. Be sure to check on the website of the school to which you are applying REA to see if there are other restrictions you need to be aware of. An REA application can either be accepted, denied or deferred. If you are deferred, your application will become part of the regular decision application pool. If you are denied under REA, you cannot resubmit your application under regular decision. If you are denied under REA, you will not be considered under RD.

There are different types of applications that you will fill out once you have decided which colleges you will be applying to and what their deadlines are. You will either be filling out the college's own application, the Common Application (<https://www.commonapp.org>), the Universal College Application (www.universalcollegeapp.com) or, if you are applying to UK schools, you may be using the Universities

and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS; <https://www.ucas.com>). If you want to compare offers of admission from schools in the UK and the US, you should have your applications sent in by January. If you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge, please remember that their application deadlines are in October. Again, please check you colleges' websites for application details and deadlines.

Things to remember when filling out your applications:

- Practice good time-management – do not procrastinate.
- Watch your deadlines.
- Follow directions carefully
- Make sure you double-check everything you send out for neatness and accuracy.
- Read questions carefully and be sure you answer them precisely.
- Be careful to take out any identifying information for a specific college if using the same text for multiple schools.

PARTS OF THE APPLICATION

The Application Form

Whether you are sending in a paper application form or applying online, you will be filling out the same kind of information including your basic demographic information, course work, extracurricular activities, academic and extracurricular honors, intended major, any kind of coursework you have taken outside of school, notable summer activities, and employment.

Transcript and Profile

Your High School Transcript is the most important piece of your college application. Colleges are looking at several things: Your course load throughout high school including your senior year classes; the level of difficulty of your courses (which should increase through your senior year); and your grades. A strong academic profile will show consistently high grades or grades that are trending upward as the difficulty of your courses increases. Colleges use the transcript as an indicator of a student's ability to succeed in college. Students at the GISW enroll in honors and AP courses beginning in their junior year as part of the accelerated curriculum of the German International School.

Standardized Test Scores

Many colleges will require you to submit SAT and/or ACT scores as well as SAT Subject test scores. You should be checking the website of the colleges to which you are applying to see what their testing requirements are. As the grading system in schools may vary, the use of the standardized test scores will help colleges predict a student's college success more accurately. Test scores are not sent by the GISW. The student is responsible for contacting the testing agencies and arranging to have the scores sent to appropriate colleges.

Essays

Many of the applications you will fill out will require you to submit one or more essays. The essay is a chance for you to give colleges a glimpse into who you are as a person, what your values are, and what special qualities you have that set you apart from the other applicants in the pool.

Letters of recommendation

Most colleges will require you to submit teacher recommendations as well as a counselor recommendation. When you choose which teachers to ask for a recommendation, choose those that know you well and can write about you in depth. Current teachers or junior year teachers in an academic class are usually preferred.

Letters of recommendation- in a nutshell:

- It is a student's responsibility to research the requirements of the colleges to which they are applying.
- Students should approach their teachers/counselor in person (*via e-mail only if absolutely necessary*) no later than September of their senior year to ask for a letter of recommendation. You may even want to let any junior year teachers that you plan on asking know that you will be seeking a letter of recommendation from them, so that they can use the time to observe you and take notes for their letter.
- Once a teacher has agreed to write you a letter, it is your responsibility to provide them with all necessary information.
- You are advised to sign the FERPA statement, waiving your right to access your letter.
- PLEASE NOTE: On occasion, the teacher you want to ask for a reference may return to Germany before your senior year. Make sure you secure your letter before the teacher leaves.
- If the college to which you are applying has specific requirements for a teacher recommendation letter, please print this out and give it to your teachers when you meet with them.
- You should provide your teachers with a list of colleges to which you are applying and the application deadlines (this is not necessary when using the common app., since all deadlines are listed on the website).
- Teachers may also write their letters in German, if they feel more comfortable doing so, and the counselor will be happy to translate the recommendation letters for them.
- All letters of recommendation are confidential. The school will send the letters directly to your designated colleges and will not give them directly to you.
- Be sure that you are aware of the specific requirements your colleges may have when you choose teachers to ask for a letter. Some colleges will require letters from specific disciplines, some may require only one letter – do your research.
- Keep your teachers and the counselor informed if you make any changes to your plans.
- Check in with your teachers about a week before the application deadline to make sure everything is on track.
- Check in with the colleges a few weeks after the deadline to make sure that your file is complete.

- Once you have received decisions from your colleges, let your teachers and your counselor know the outcome. This is the polite thing to do, and we really want to know!
- At the end of it all, send your teachers a note of appreciation. Writing letters of recommendation is not part of their job description, and your teachers take a great deal of time on the letters to make them as strong as possible.

FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION

Although colleges will update their application forms and procedures during the summer, there are many aspects that stay pretty constant from year to year. Below, is some general information on how to fill out the application forms.

START EARLY! This point cannot be overemphasized. Create a filing system for your college information so you can keep track of application deadlines, requirements, essay topics, interview information (if the college offers them), test scores, financial aid information, scholarship requirements and deadlines, etc. If you are applying to performance programs (dance, theater, music) or Art schools, you will need to keep track of the deadlines for sending in your portfolio or scheduling an audition. There may be several deadlines that you will need to keep track of. If you are using the Common Application, you will need to create an account at www.commonapp.org before you can use the *Dashboard* and other features to help you fill out the application and keep track of the process for each of your schools.

Read instructions carefully, no matter what type of application you are submitting. Fill in all required sections of the application. It may be helpful to fill out the forms together with a parent, since there will be questions about family and financial aid, that require their input. Please contact the guidance counselor if you have any questions regarding the application. **Note:** The school will provide you with a copy of your High School Report card, which lists courses taken (Advanced Placement and Honors courses marked appropriately), grades received, and credits earned. You will be responsible for arranging to have your SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT scores sent to the colleges directly through your www.collegeboard.org account. Keep in mind that it can take up to two weeks for the testing agency to process your request.

Once you have filled out all the information, be sure to print out a copy of the application before you submit it. You never know if you might need it. Also make a note of your Common Application ID number if you are using the Common Application and keep it with your records. You will be able to check on the progress of your application at any time using this ID.

Important: You need not necessarily be first in line to send off your application, but don't wait until the last minute. If you wait too long, there may not be time to fix a problem that might pop up. Know the individual deadlines at your colleges for housing opportunities, alumni interviews, portfolio applications, or scholarships. At most colleges, application deadlines will be "postmark" deadlines. That means the stamp on your application must be on or before the deadline. For example, if you are submitting online by a January 1 deadline, you will have until 11:59 pm on January 1 to hit "Submit."

Be mindful of the GISW's vacation schedule. You should have everything ready to go BEFORE we go on break, as you may not be able to reach your teachers with any last-minute questions or changes. Also, many colleges will close completely during Christmas and New Year's, so there will not necessarily be someone in the admissions office to advise you.

Students have asked me if "more is better" when submitting materials. The short answer is "No." If the college asks you to submit two letters of recommendation from teachers, send them two letters. Do not send them three. If a school indicates on the application or the website that additional material is required or that you are welcome to send it if you wish, then you may submit supplementary materials to that school. Keep in mind, colleges differ. Just because one school asks for more material, it does not mean that they all want it. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS EXACTLY!

THE ESSAY

Although most of the students filing applications over the years feel the essay is just an anxiety-inducing, sleep-deprivation-causing part of the application, when you think about it, it is the one piece of your application that is completely in your control. You decide what to write, you decide what you want colleges to know about you, you decide how to fill your application with life. It's not about numbers, grades, and test scores. It is about you, your personality, your values, and your sense of humor, the highlights that make you special and that you want to share with the admissions officers reading your application. From your perspective, the essay gives you a chance to help yourself stand out from the crowd. From the perspective of the admissions officers, it is a chance for them to get to know you, your writing style, and your abilities.

If your college requires essays, they will usually ask for one or two longer personal statements, and maybe a few short-answer essays to questions they provide. Be sure to check with each school to which you are applying to ensure that you are aware of their specific essay requirements. Note: If you are applying via the Common Application, some of the schools may also require additional writing supplements in addition to the Common App. *You are responsible for making sure you know what a school wants from you.*

Before you get started on your essay, it might help you to remember that there is no single right answer to any of the different essay questions out there. So don't waste time trying to figure out what exactly the admissions officer reading your essay is looking for. Whoever the admissions officer is that is reading your essay, they want to read about *you*. Choose to write about something that is meaningful to you, something you feel passionate about, and make sure your own voice comes through loud and clear in your writing. Many students feel that they need to write about how they are going to save the world or share their life story using between 250 and 650 words. Keep it simple and specific, and make sure you are being authentic and truthful. Give the reader a little written "selfie" of the real you and make it shine.

Although there may seem to be an infinite array of college essays, they tend to fall into one of three main categories: the “Who are you?” essay; the “Why do you want to attend our school?” essay; and the “Creative-thinking outside the box” essay. The “Who are you?” essay – also known as the personal essay or personal statement- has a longer format, which gives you a little more room to make your points. When you are selecting your topic, keep in mind that there tend to be certain themes that come up quite often in such essays. Although you may certainly use a more common topic, keep in mind that your essay will have to be very strong to set you apart from the other students also using the same topic. Also, while there are endless topics that can work for your essays, there are some that should be avoided. Among these are things like controversial political and social issues (abortion comes to mind), mental illness, and sexual experiences. Your topic should not make the reader uncomfortable.

DOs and DON'Ts on writing the college application essay

DO's

Keep your focus narrow and personal

The thing that can really make your essay stand out is choosing a topic that is unique to you and writing a strong essay about this. Even a seemingly “small” topic that is unique to you can be much easier to make distinctive and personal. Have a clear main idea that can be followed from beginning to end. Ask someone else to read just the introduction to see what s/he thinks the essay is about.

Prove it

Develop your main idea with vivid, specific facts, events, quotations, examples, and reasons. For example:

- **Okay:** I like to be surrounded by people with a variety of backgrounds and interests.
- **Better:** During that night, I sang the theme song from *Casablanca* with a baseball coach who thinks he's Humphrey Bogart, discussed Marxism with a little old lady, and heard more than I ever wanted to know about some woman's lasik eye surgery.

Be specific

Avoid generic, predictable writing and use specific, vivid details. For example:

- **Okay:** I want to help people. I have gotten so much out of life through the love and guidance of my family, and I feel that many individuals have not been as fortunate. Therefore, I would like to expand the lives of others.
- **Better:** My mom and dad stood on plenty of sidelines until their shoes were full of water, or their fingers started to freeze, or someone's golden retriever signed its name on their coats in mud. I think that that is the kind of commitment that I would like to bring to my work with fourth-graders.

DON'Ts

Avoid standard topics

Although it is important to keep in mind that there is no “right” topic to choose, most admissions officers read plenty of essays on the charms of their university, the evils of terrorism, and the personal commitment involved in becoming a doctor. Bring something new to the table, and don't waste time trying to figure out what the admissions officer reading your essay wants to hear.

Don't write a résumé.

Don't include information in your essay that is found elsewhere in your application. Your essay will end up sounding like an autobiography, travelogue or laundry list. Yawn.

- **Overloaded:** During my junior year, I played first singles on the tennis team, served on the student council, maintained a B+ average, traveled to France, and worked in a coffee shop.

Don't use 50 words when 5 will do

- **Okay:** Over the years, it has been pointed out to me by my parents, friends, and teachers – and I have even noticed this about myself - that I am not the neatest person in the world.
- **Better:** I'm a slob.

Don't forget to proofread

- Typos and spelling or grammatical errors can be interpreted as carelessness or just bad writing. Don't rely on your computer's spell-check. It can miss errors like the ones below:
- After I graduate **form** high school, I plan to work for a nonprofit organization during the summer
- From that day on, Daniel was my best **fried**.

Don't Brag

- Highlight your accomplishments, but in a way that does not solely focus on how important you are for what you did.
- Rather, you should emphasize what you have learned from an experience.

Below are some questions you can ask yourself to help you pick a topic. Remember the topic does not have to be big – it can be a little thing that was meaningful to you.

Sample questions:

What do I like to do?

If I could have one day to do anything I wanted, what would I do?

What are the things that are truly important to me?

Do I have family traditions that are particularly meaningful to me?

How do I spend my free time?

Can I think of an event or moment in time that helped shape me into who I am today?

Once you have found your topic, you will write a first draft. You will find that a good essay will go through many drafts and will be revised many times before it is finished. DO NOT just put something on paper once and be satisfied. Each time you read your essay again, you will ask yourself questions such as:

- Does my essay draw the reader in?
- Is my voice clear?
- Am I using details that bring my essay to life?
- Am I using my active voice?
- Am I answering the essay prompt?
- What impression is my essay leaving?
- How am I coming across in my essay?
- Does my conclusion bring my story full circle?

The process of writing your essay will take time, and you should be willing to invest this time. Have other people read your essay and give you feedback. This does not mean you should have others write your essay or re-write your words, and too much feedback can blur your individuality. However, it can be helpful if others point out sections that may be unclear, or lack your voice, or could be expressed with more detail. In the end, just be sure that your essay is your own personal work. Finally, have at least one other person proofread it at the end to check for grammar and spelling errors, then save your document and pat yourself on the back. Helpful resources for writing your essay include:

- https://www.amazon.com/How-Prepare-Standout-College-Application/dp/1118414403/ref=pd_sim_14_4?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=Y6QEH9W7TVT17HA9ZXF
- https://www.amazon.com/Conquering-College-Admissions-Essay-Second/dp/1607743663/ref=pd_sim_14_1?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=4V0YF999GHYAG63QKF3Z
- https://www.amazon.com/50-Successful-Harvard-Application-Essays/dp/1250048052/ref=pd_sim_14_2?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=VF3QDD36KWXB14SEVCVM
- https://www.amazon.com/College-Essay-Essentials-Step-Step/dp/149263512X/ref=pd_sim_14_16?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=8RY91FGFW7R2JNFZ7VWH

FINANCIAL AID

Most families will be asking themselves at some point how they are going to meet the rising cost of college tuition. The good news is that there are financial aid opportunities out there to help you foot the bill. Researching financial aid possibilities can be just as important as researching individual schools you are interested in attending. Take your time with this process and maybe even meet with a financial aid officer at one of the colleges you are interested in. You might be surprised at what you find out.

Basically, there are two types of financial aid: need-based aid and merit aid. Need-based aid is determined by your calculated expected family contribution. It must be determined that you will not be

able to cover the cost of tuition. **Need-based aid** includes Grants (Federal, State and College Funded) and Self-Help such loans and work-study programs. Colleges award need using a simple equation:

Cost of attendance (incl. tuition and fees, room and board, books, travel, additional personal expenses)

– **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**

= Financial Need

Merit Aid is not necessarily tied to a student's demonstrated need, but can be awarded by a college to any student that they would really like to have attend their school.

It is important for families to understand the process of determining how much financial aid they might be able to receive, or whether they are even eligible to receive any at all. In order to help you figure this out, colleges are required by law to have a net price calculator (usually found on their Financial Aid webpage) that can help you estimate your bottom line cost for attending that college.

Any applicant for need-based financial aid that is a US citizen or permanent resident must complete the FAFSA (**F**ree **A**pplication for **F**ederal **S**tudent **A**id). It is the only form for applying for federal aid, and may also be required to determine if you qualify for institutional aid as well. A school may also require you to fill out the CSS PROFILE (**C**ollege **S**cholarship **S**ervice **P**rofile) in addition to the FAFSA.

The first day the FAFSA can be submitted is January 1 of the year a student plans to start college. It will require you to submit detailed information from federal income tax returns for the previous calendar year, current asset information and a list of colleges to which a student is applying. You should begin filing the FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible, as some schools do have extremely early deadlines, some even in the middle of January. The old adage "first come, first served" applies. The FAFSA is submitted online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. You may also find more information about the FAFSA at the Federal Student Aid Information Center at www.studentaid.ed.gov. There is no fee for submitting the FAFSA and no one should charge you for their help in completing it. After submitting the FAFSA you should receive your **Student Aid Report (SAR)** which is a summary of the information you provided on the FAFSA as well as the **Expected Family Contribution** that has been calculated. The colleges that you indicated on the FAFSA will also receive an electronic version of the SAR, which they will use to calculate the Expected Family Contribution for their school. This will then be subtracted from the cost of tuition at that school. If your EFC is equal to or more than the cost of attendance at that school, you do not qualify for financial aid. Since the cost of attendance varies from school to school, you may not be eligible for financial aid at a school with lower tuition, but may qualify at a hi-cost institution. Keep in mind: even if you do not qualify for need-based aid, you may still qualify for loans or merit-based scholarships.

Some colleges require the CSS PROFILE in addition to the FAFSA. Many of the questions on the PROFILE are the same as on the FAFSA, but it is more customized for each family, and questions vary depending on the colleges you list when registering for the PROFILE. This application can only be submitted online. There is a registration fee as well as a processing fee for the PROFILE for each college that requires you

to submit the PROFILE. The PROFILE is available beginning October 1 for that year's application cycle and may be required within a few weeks of application deadlines, depending on the school. You should be very clear on all the financial aid deadlines for each school - especially a college's priority deadlines. Filing your PROFILE as early as possible is recommended. The PROFILE is available at www.profileonline.collegeboard.org.

Web Resources for Financial Aid:

- www.fastweb.com
- www.studentaid.ed.gov
- www.nasfaa.org
- www.finaid.org
- www.americorps.gov
- www.collegesavings.org

Financial Aid for students applying under Early Decision programs:

If you are applying Early Decision to a college, please keep in mind that should you be admitted to your ED program, you will not have the option of comparing other financial aid packages from Regular Decision schools. Therefore, if the amount of financial aid you receive is a determining factor in your decision to accept an offer of admission, you may not want to apply to a college under Early Decision. As with so many aspects of the admissions process, do your research. Speak to the Financial Aid office at schools to which you are applying. They will be happy to give you information on their policies, and will help you make an informed decision on how best to proceed with your application.

Financial Aid for International Students:

Students who are non-U.S. citizens or residents who entered the U.S. with either a F-1 or J-1 student visa and who will return to their home country upon completion of their studies are considered international students and are not eligible for U.S. government loans, grants, or work-study programs. Financial aid for international students is extremely limited, but it is available at some colleges in the form of need-based aid or merit-based scholarships. Helpful information on the financial aid process at U.S. colleges or schools that offer financial aid for international student can be found at:

- www.nafsa.org (The Association of International Educators)
- www.fastweb.com
- www.iie.org (Institute for International Education)
- www.edupass.org

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Although many students graduate high school in the summer and begin their college education at four-year colleges and universities in the fall, some students are choosing to begin their post-high school studies at community colleges. According to the National Student Clearinghouse "community colleges

play an increasingly important role for students on the way to a baccalaureate degree, and this pathway is very successful for those who transfer.” Sometimes overlooked, earning college credit at a community college is an extremely viable option on your way to a bachelor’s degree. According to www.usnews.com “the quality of instruction at many community colleges is on par with the courses taught at four-year universities, experts say. Two-year programs are also a great option for students interested in well-paying technology or health care professions that don’t require a bachelor’s degree. Articulation agreements – a partnership between two-and four-year institutions that outlines a clear path to college – can help students who do need a bachelor’s earn the degree at a fraction of the cost.” The following websites provide information you may find interesting as you are planning for college:

<http://www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/slideshows/10-reasons-to-attend-a-community-college>

<http://www.collegetransfer.net/AskCT/WhatisanArticulationAgreement>

<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/agreements/>

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2009/09/16/10-tips-for-transferring-from-community-college>

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/student-loan-ranger/2011/05/18/starting-at-community-college-can-save-thousands>

DECISION TIME

After submitting your applications, it is time to wait to hear from the colleges. Depending on the type of admissions program under which you applied, you can expect to hear from a college in December, or you will need to wait until spring. Typically, if you applied for early decision, you should be notified around December 15th. If you applied to colleges where there is rolling admission, it generally can take six to eight weeks to receive a decision. If you applied regular admission, your deadlines were around the 1st of the year and those decisions are revealed in March and April, with the Ivy Leagues usually being around the last to announce their decisions. Although a few colleges still main their decisions, most notify students electronically on a designated date.

If you applied early under a restrictive plan and are accepted, your college application process has come to a satisfying end. If you applied for financial aid, you will be getting information on the college’s financial aid offer as well. If the offer does **not** cover your financial needs, you should contact the financial aid office immediately and politely ask them to take another look at our financial aid package. There may yet be hope. If you did not apply for financial aid, you must withdraw all other applications and submit the required intent-to-enroll form and your deposit by the specified deadline.

The number of students applying early is on the rise. That means that more students are denied or deferred in order to leave space for those applying regular decision. If you are deferred, your application will be automatically reviewed again together with the regular applications. If you are deferred, bear in mind that although you still have a chance of being accepted in the regular decision cycle, you will be competing against a large applicant pool, making the odds of acceptance statistically lower. However, there are some things that you can do after having been deferred. If you are still convinced that the

school that deferred you is your top pick, you should send a letter reaffirming that you are still interested in attending. Also, if there have been any significant changes to your academic profile since you first applied (i.e. any new academic honors, distinctions), you should mention these. Since the decisions that colleges reach are unpredictable, it is a good idea to prepare for all eventualities. You should have applications ready to go to the other schools that are on your list.

Try not be too discouraged if you are denied or wait-listed by a school that you were really excited about. Keep things in perspective. A school's decision to wait-list or deny is based on a variety of factors – many of which are completely out of your control and none of which have any bearing on who you are as a person. There is no such thing as a perfect college. The college experience is what you make of it, no matter where you choose to attend.

THE GAP YEAR

What is a Gap Year?

According to the American Gap Organization “a gap year is an experiential semester or year typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness.”

Gap Years originally started in the United Kingdom in the 1970's as a way to fill the 7 or 8 month gap between final exams and the beginning of university. The intention in the UK for that time was to contribute to the development of the student usually through an extended international experience.

Gap Years came to the United States in the early 1980's through the work of Cornelius H. Bull, founder of Interim Programs. Since its transition to the United States, Gap Years have taken on a life of their own - now embodying every manner of program and opportunity imaginable, both domestically and internationally, all with the shared purpose of **increasing self-awareness, learning about different cultural perspectives, and experimenting with future possible careers**. Since their broader acceptance into the American system of education, they have served the added benefit of ameliorating a sense of academic burnout. In fact, in a recent study, one of the two biggest reasons Gap Year students chose to take a Gap Year was precisely to address academic burnout.”

Why take a Gap Year?

There are several reasons that a student might consider taking time between graduating from high school and beginning college. Some students feel like they need a break from school and the daily grind of academics. Maybe you were accepted into a school, but don't feel as excited about attending as you once did. Maybe you feel like you would like to travel or gain some experience in the field that interests you through an internship or volunteer work. Some schools, most notably among them Harvard, even encourage admitted students to consider the option of a gap year. If you are thinking about a gap year, there are some things you should keep in mind.

1. Plan out your gap year. Below are several websites that can help you research gap year programs and options to help you determine if a gap year is right for you, and, if so, what type of gap year works best for you.

<http://www.americangap.org/fav-colleges.php>

<http://usagapyearfairs.org/programs/>

<https://rusticpathways.com/>

<http://www.interimprograms.com/>

2. Even if you are sure that you will take a year off before beginning college, you are advised to complete your college applications during your senior year. It is simply easier when you have your teachers, administrators, and counselors at your fingertips. After you leave high school it may not be as easy to get letters or recommendation or to meet with your counselor if you have questions on the application forms. Specifically at the German International School your teacher may have returned to Germany and it will be very difficult to obtain a recommendation letter.

3. You should contact your prospective colleges or universities to inquire about their gap year policy. Some schools encourage a gap year, but others may not. Their policy may require to you to reapply for the following year if you choose to take a gap year after high school.

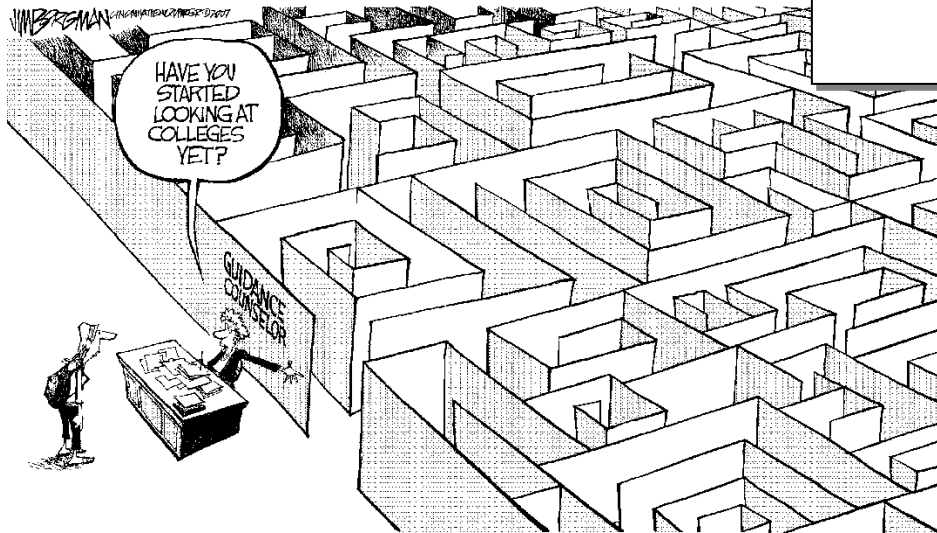
There Is Always More to Learn...

Some of the information presented in this handbook is summarized or sometimes directly quoted from a variety of sources. If you are interested in further information on any of the topics discussed above, you may want to review additional material from some of the sources that I consulted. There is a wealth of information available on the topic of college admissions, but some of my favorite resources include *Admission Matters*, *Six Weeks to Success*, *College Admission*, *Get in2 College*, the *College Counselor's Sourcebook*, websites like www.usnews.com, www.petersons.com, www.princetonreview.com, www.collegeboard.com, www.forbes.com, www.fastweb.com, and many others. I hope that you have found this handbook useful and wish you all the best for a bright and successful future.

APPENDIX I

Admissions Timeline

Grades 9-12



9th GRADE

- Review your academic progress.
 - Meet with your counselor.
 - Become familiar with resources that prepare you for college.
 - Explore various extracurricular activities.
 - Find a summer job, do volunteer work or attend a summer program.
-

10th GRADE

- Continue extracurricular activities.
- Begin narrowing down your activities and work toward leadership positions.
- Take PSAT for practice in October.

- Start attending college fairs familiarize yourself with websites.
 - Visit colleges, attend a summer program.
-

11th GRADE

SEPTEMBER - FEBRUARY

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT. It counts!
- Take the SAT/ACT, especially if you are applying Early Admission or Early Decision.
- Register for SAT Subject Tests.
- Attend career presentations.
- Visit college-sponsored information meetings.
- Don't forget about community service hours.
- Visit College Campuses/Get a copy of applications to preview.
- Meet with your guidance counselor regularly.
- Get to know your favorite teachers well – ask for recommendation letters.

******Make sure you secure letters of recommendation from any teachers returning to Germany at the end of the year.******

MARCH - MAY

- Start identifying appropriate colleges – make your preliminary list of schools.
 - Consider an internship for the senior year.
 - Attend College Fairs.
 - Take AP Exams in May.
 - Meet with your counselor to plan.
 - Get college applications.
 - Visit colleges over the summer.
 - If you are interested in playing Division I or II sports in college, be sure to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.
-

12th GRADE

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER

- Keep grades up – no senior slump!
- Finalize your college list and mark the deadlines.
- Take (or retake if necessary) SAT/ACT– if you are applying for early admission, November tests are typically the last ones you can take to remain eligible.
- Give your final list of schools and deadlines to your counselor.
- Ask teachers and counselors to complete Evaluation Forms.
- Finalize your college essays – START EARLY!

- Arrange college interviews and practice for them.

DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

- Send out applications on time.
- Watch your deadlines!
- Complete financial aid forms (FAFSA, CSS PROFILE) – apply for your FAFSA PIN number.
- Continue to apply for scholarships.
- Ask your counselor to complete any Mid-Year School Reports.

MARCH – MAY

- Wait for notification letters (beginning of April).
- If you are waitlisted – write a letter reiterating your interest in being admitted.
- Decision time! Notify your school of choice by May 1 that you will attend.
- If you have not already done so, send thank-you letters to all your helpers, and inform them of where you have decided to attend college.
- Check your mail for information on orientation, housing, course selection.
- Send off your first payment on time.
- Get ready to move in and have a wonderful freshman year!

Congratulations and all the best for the next chapter in your life!

APPENDIX II

“Test Optional” and “Test Flexible” Schools

What is “Test Optional?”

According to www.collegedata.com, a test-optional admissions policy means some applicants can choose not to submit SAT or ACT scores. The rules vary from college to college. You can usually find a college's rules on its website.

- Some test-optional colleges require scores if students are out of state or international, are declaring certain majors, or are applying for scholarships from the college.
- Some colleges may determine your test-optional eligibility using an index calculated from your GPA and SAT or ACT scores.

What is “Test Flexible”?

According to www.collegexpress.com, test flexible schools do not require the ACT or SAT but require other exams (AP, SAT Subject Tests, etc.) be submitted. Such schools include New York University, Middlebury College, and Hamilton College.

Please visit <http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional> if you are interested in viewing a list of institutions that are "test optional," "test flexible" or otherwise de-emphasize the use of standardized tests by making admissions decisions about substantial numbers of applicants who recently graduated from U.S. high schools without using the SAT or ACT. As the notes indicate, some schools exempt students who meet grade-point average or class rank criteria while others require SAT or ACT scores but use them only for placement purposes or to conduct research studies. Please check with the school's admissions office to learn more about specific admissions requirements, particularly for international or non-traditional students.

Sources: *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges 2015*; *College Board 2017 College Handbook*; *U.S. News & World Report College Guide 2016*; admissions office websites; news reports; and email communications.

Colleges and Universities That Have Accepted GISW Students 2001-2016



Air Force Academy

American University

American University, London

American University, Rome

Amherst College

Appalachian State

Art Institute of Boston

Bennington College

Barnard College

Bishop's University, Quebec

Boston College

Boston University

Bowdoin College
Brandeis University, MA
Brown University
Bucknell University
California College of Art
California Design College
Carleton University, Ontario
Carnegie Mellon
Catholic University of America
Central St. Martins, London
Champlain College, Vermont
Chapman University, CA
Colgate University
Colorado College
Columbia University
Concordia University, Quebec
Cornell University
Dartmouth College
Denison University
Dickinson College, PA
Drexel University

Duke University
Edinburgh College of Art
Elon University
Emerson College
Evergreen College
Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising
Fashion Institute of Technology
George Mason University
Georgetown University
Georgetown University, Qatar
George Washington University
Georgia Tech
Glasgow School of Art
Goucher College
Hobart and William Smith Colleges, London
Hampshire College
Harvard University
IE University, Madrid
Ithaca College
James Madison University
Johns Hopkins University

Kings College, UK
London College of Fashion
Loyola University
Lynchburg College
Mary Washington University
Marymount University
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
McDaniel College, MD
McGill University, Quebec
Middlebury College, Vermont
MIT
NOVA
Northeastern University
Northwestern
University of Notre Dame
NYU
Penn State
Pratt Institute, NY
Princeton University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, NY
Rhode Island School of Design

School of the Museum of Fine Arts
School of Visual Arts
Shepherd University
Stanford University
St. Andrews (Scotland)
St. John's University
St. Mary's College
Towson University
Tufts University
Tulane University
University of Arizona
University of California: Berkeley
University of California: L.A.
University of California: Santa Barbara
University of Athens
University of Chicago
University of Colorado: Boulder
University of Edinburgh
University of Maryland
University of Massachusetts
University of Miami

University of Michigan

University of Montana

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

University of Pennsylvania

University of Pittsburgh

University of Toronto

University of Vermont

Ursinus College, PA

Utrecht, Netherlands

UVA

Vanderbilt University

Virginia Tech

Wentworth Institute of technology

Wesleyan

William and Mary

Yale University