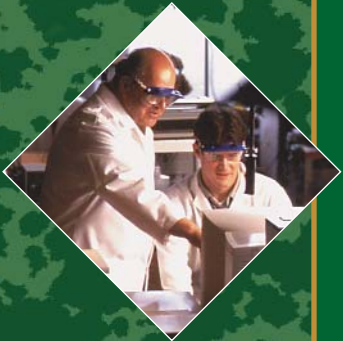
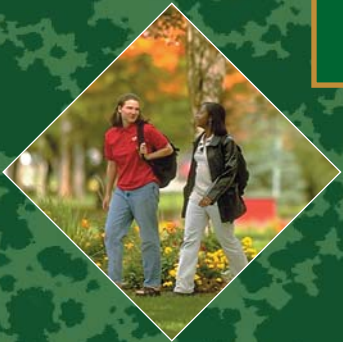




*The Associated Colleges
of the Midwest present*



The Pre-College Planner



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The Pre-College Planner

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Thousands of colleges ... and lots of options for you to consider

If you are like many people considering college, you might already have one in mind that you want to attend. Maybe it's a college or university that someone in your family went to, or one that a friend of yours attends. Perhaps the college is in your hometown, or you're a fan of its sports teams.

These are strong influences, and should not be ignored. On the other hand, such early impressions might make you think that it's the perfect college for you. This probably isn't true.

There are about 3,500 colleges and universities in the United States — and, like the students who attend them, they're all different. They are private and public, large and small, located in cities and small towns. Some are church-related, others are not. Some offer the liberal arts and sciences, while others are specialized or technical.

As you look at colleges, you will have to ask yourself how important these factors are to you. But your choice of a college should not be dictated by a short visit or a casual comment.

Understanding that there's no perfect college for you also will make the application process more exciting. If you narrow your sights to only one college, you may spend too much time worrying about gaining admission to that particular school. That will keep you from seriously considering other colleges and universities.

We urge you to look at a variety of options, and you'll quickly find that each one has its own advantages.



Self-assessment



“Where are you going to college?”

If you haven’t heard that question already, you probably will soon. Where do you begin to find the college that’s right for you?

When the ancient Greeks had questions they couldn’t answer, they consulted the famous oracle at Delphi, a village in central Greece. Inscribed on the temple of Apollo was the saying: “Know thyself.”

To choose a college, you don’t have to consult an oracle. But you do have to know something about yourself — your interests and abilities, dreams and goals, and reasons for attending college.

Take some time to think about what your goals are for your education and your life. This self-knowledge will help you decide what to look for and which questions to ask as you investigate colleges. Later on, it will help you sort out which colleges and universities have the programs, facilities and atmosphere that will be best for you.

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Interest and talent inventory

Answer the following questions in the space provided or on a separate piece of paper.

1. What subjects in school do you like best? List them, along with the talents or aptitudes used in these courses.

Subject

Example: art

Talents/aptitudes involved

creativity, expressiveness

2. List three achievements in your life of which you are most proud. What talents or abilities led to these achievements?

Achievement

*Example: winning
debate contest*

Talents/abilities involved

*ability to construct and present
persuasive arguments*

3. What are your hobbies or interests outside of school? What talents or skills are used in them?

Hobbies/interests

Talents/skills involved

4. Sometimes we’re not aware of all our strengths and talents. Ask a close friend or teacher to list three things he or she thinks you do especially well. It doesn’t have to be something specific like playing football or the French horn — talents like being a good listener or a good leader in a group can be listed. Compare their answers with your lists in questions 1, 2 and 3.

As you consider colleges, keep in mind the academic subjects and extracurricular activities that you do well in and enjoy the most. Your interest in them probably will continue in college, and you can explore them in more depth. However, remember that you'll be able to try new subjects and activities, too.

In deciding what kind of education best meets your needs, one choice you'll make is between a liberal arts education and a more specialized education.

Liberal arts and sciences?



A liberal arts and sciences education is broad. You'll study literature, languages, and the natural and social sciences. There also might be options to study computer science and business, to set up a career internship, and to study abroad for a term.

Studies have shown that a liberal arts education makes you a careful reasoner and a creative and flexible thinker. You'll learn to speak and write persuasively and to solve complex problems. All of these are qualities that employers and graduate programs value.

A liberal arts education will help you understand the world around you and develop your interests, talents and values. If you enjoy a variety of subjects and think you could succeed in a number of areas, then you probably should consider the liberal arts and sciences.

Or specialized education?

Specialized education will train you for a specific job or career. Perhaps you'd like to be a commercial artist or photographer, an interior designer or a licensed practical nurse. Maybe your interests are in construction technology or agriculture.

For fields like these that require technical expertise, you should consider specialized education. You'll find that it is most commonly offered at a large university, community college or technical institute.

Small or large?

You'll quickly discover in your search that colleges range in size from a few hundred students to 30,000 or more — the size of a small city! What size is right for you?

At a smaller-sized college or university, you might enjoy more personal attention and better access to equipment and facilities. You may find it easier to get involved in activities outside of class. Also, you'd probably have more contact with faculty, and be more likely to get into the courses you want to take.

Large state schools usually offer many courses in a wide variety of fields, with specialties such as advertising or forestry. Class sizes probably will be larger, especially for lecture courses. Facilities and equipment are likely to be extensive, but used by many people.

What about cost?

College costs have risen sharply in recent years, at public and private schools alike. But before you cross a college off your list because of its price tag, find out what financial assistance might be available.

Many colleges and universities that charge a lot also provide substantial financial aid. With the aid, you may find that it costs you no more to attend a higher-priced school than one that appears to cost less.

Don't let initial costs alone determine your future. The extra cost of attending one school rather than another is small when you divide it by the number of years this education must serve you. (More on financial assistance later.)

Other factors

1. In what clubs, activities and sports would you like to participate?
2. Do you seek opportunities for international study?

“Before you cross a college off your list because of its price tag, find out what financial assistance might be available.”

3. Is the college's distance from your home important to you? How close or far away would you like it to be?
4. Are you looking for a particular type of climate or scenery? Do you want access to outdoor recreation?
5. Is diversity of students important to you? Would you like to go to school with people from other parts of the United States and from other countries?
6. Would you prefer a residential college, where most students live on campus and take part in college activities on the weekends? Would you prefer a commuter campus?
7. Is the size of the town or city in which the college is located important to you?
8. Do you want to attend a college with a religious affiliation?

What colleges look for in prospective students

The students set the tone and atmosphere of a college or university. Knowing that, admission officers try to fill the first-year class with interesting, creative and sensitive young people.

Most college representatives are eager to match you with their college only if you'll enjoy it and are likely to do well there. A mismatch, while sometimes unavoidable, can be costly for both the student and the college.

Thus professional admission representatives will try to give you accurate and complete information. They'll be open about the strengths and weaknesses of their colleges. They'll help you work your way through the admission process and might suggest other colleges for you to explore.

To decide whether you and a college will fit well together, admission counselors look at a number of factors.



Courses and grades in high school are most important

Your high school record probably will be the most important factor in whether you'll be admitted to a particular college or university. Good grades in all your courses throughout high school show that you're willing to work hard and have an interest in a variety of subjects.

A poor grade or two in high school does not necessarily mean you won't be admitted to a selective college. If your grades improve, even late in your high school career, most colleges will notice.

Colleges also consider the diversity and difficulty of the courses you've taken. Success in the tougher courses (honors, accelerated, International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement) suggests you'll do well in college.

Most colleges prefer that students take four years of English, three or more years of mathematics, science and social science, and at least two years of a foreign language. Colleges that are more selective may be looking for a more demanding high school schedule. However, admission representatives will take into account what your school offers.

Scores on standardized tests

The widely-used tests are the SAT I and the ACT. Usually, these tests are taken during the junior and senior years. To gain experience, many students take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) or the PLAN in their sophomore year. The PSAT is required to qualify for a National Merit Scholarship.

How important are your test scores? That depends on where you apply. Most colleges require them, although some put less emphasis on the tests.

College guidebooks and admission materials often list the average test scores of students at a college or university. Keep in mind that this is an average, not a minimum. The scores of students admitted to the school

are in a range extending below, as well as above, that average. An increasing number of colleges list a range that shows the scores of the middle 50 percent of the students who attend the school.

College admission officers are fully aware, too, that some students don't "test well." Slow reading speed, unfamiliarity with the test format or simple fear may cause a student to perform poorly on standardized tests.

For these reasons, virtually all colleges also consider other factors when they select students. They look at grades, class rank, recommendations, essays and a student's special talents and achievements.

Activities outside the classroom

Most colleges, and liberal arts colleges especially, look for students with many interests. Colleges notice students involved in theater, musical groups, special interest clubs (such as photography or debate), student publications, sports or student government. Community service and church activities are important to many colleges, as well.

Of course, colleges also look for students who belong to academic groups, such as honor societies, language clubs and science clubs.

Part-time work, interesting summer adventures or unusual experiences may also be of interest to some colleges.

Recommendations

Colleges differ when it comes to recommendations. Most require a recommendation from your high school guidance counselor. Some also ask for academic references from teachers and/or a personal reference from an adult you know well, such as a friend of the family, an employer or a member of the clergy.

It is important that these people know you well enough to provide valuable insights about you. They'll be asked about your intellectual strengths, your personality and what you do outside of class.

“Most colleges, and liberal arts colleges especially, look for students with many interests.”



Too often, neither the counselor nor a teacher knows a student well enough to accurately assess his or her potential. We suggest you spend time with your guidance counselor and make an effort to know one or two teachers well.

“The essay is your chance to personalize your application.”

The essay

Many colleges require an essay as part of the application. This can be an intimidating task. Here are some points to keep in mind as you approach the essay.

- The essay is your chance to personalize your application and to express yourself in a way that you cannot in the rest of the application.
- Admission officers are not looking for a particular “correct answer” on the essay. They want to find out what you are like as an individual.
- The essay is a demonstration of your writing ability, which is a key component of success in college. Be sure to use the principles of good writing, such as developing a logical structure for your essay, checking your grammar and proofreading carefully.

Finding colleges that match your goals

Does the process of finding out about colleges and applying seem difficult, and even a bit frightening? If so, you’re not alone. Many students feel that way, at least sometimes.

Actually, choosing a college should be part of an exciting search for your future. What you learn at college and the experiences you have there will be a part of you always.

If you’re excited about choosing a college, the admission process will be more interesting. Also, your enthusiasm will show up in your application essays and interviews.

Through the self-assessment, you’ve started to narrow down the kind of education and college you want. Now you can begin to select the schools that meet your requirements. You may have a list already. To expand it, turn to the sources listed on the following page.



Counselor and teachers

Check with your high school counselor for information and advice about colleges. The counseling office might have a computer data base of colleges or be able to help you use the Internet to gather current information about colleges. Your teachers also might be able to suggest colleges for you to explore.

Standardized tests



Your counselor can tell you when the standardized tests will be given in your area. If you mark the appropriate box when you register for the PSAT, SAT, PLAN or ACT, you'll probably get brochures and letters from a lot of colleges and universities. Look over this material and discuss it with your parents, friends and counselors.

Parents

Often, the most successful college choices are made when students and parents work as a team to explore options.

Your friends

They may know of some colleges that are unfamiliar to you. Maybe they have brothers or sisters in college to whom you could talk. Remember, though, that what you and your family look for in a college may be very different from what your friends want.

College guides

There are many fine guidebooks to colleges and universities, such as those listed on the following page. They are available at your school's guidance office, high school or public library, or at a bookstore.

These books are good sources for objective information about enrollment, major fields of study, church affiliation, costs and student life.

Be wary of any guide that claims to rank colleges and universities. The quality of your educational experience will depend more on how well the college meets your needs and goals than on any criteria a guide might use to rank colleges.

Also, no one guide can capture the spirit or strength of a college. If you compare several accounts, though, you can better judge a college's admission literature.

Barron's Profiles of American Colleges

College Division of Barron's Educational Series

The College Handbook

The College Board

Peterson's Four-Year Colleges

Peterson's, a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

“No one guide can capture the spirit or strength of a college.”

Online resources

The following sites can help you search for colleges on the Web.

www.studentaid.ed.gov Check under the “Choosing” tab and then “College Selection” for the College Finder to search for colleges and universities that match your criteria. This site, provided by the U.S. Department of Education, has a Spanish language version.

www.nacacnet.org Look in the “Student Resources” section for a link to the *Steps to College* online newsletter. This site is sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

www.collegeboard.com A college search feature on this site uses information on colleges from *The College Handbook*.

www.petersons.com Information from Peterson's college guides are used on this site to help you search for colleges.

College Web sites

You can get lots of information online from the Web sites of individual colleges and universities. The sites will have facts and figures about the colleges, details about admission requirements and, in many cases, online applications and virtual campus tours.

Web pages for a college's academic departments usually include course listings and faculty biographies. Professors often set up home pages for their courses, which can give you a sense of what classes at the college are like.

There will also be pages about student clubs and activities, a calendar of campus events and, perhaps, the student newspaper. Browse through the students' home pages to see a range of their interests and opinions.



College admission representatives

Admission representatives from colleges and universities may visit your high school during the school year. Check with the guidance or college counseling office for a schedule of those visits.

Be sure to seek out representatives from the colleges that interest you. This is a good opportunity to have your questions answered.

College fairs

Your counselor can tell you about "college fairs" or "college nights" in your area. At these events, admission representatives from many colleges gather in one place to talk to high school students and their parents.

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Request information from colleges

As you compile a list of colleges and universities you might be interested in, contact them for information. You can find the addresses, toll-free telephone numbers and Web site addresses in the college guidebooks, at your high school's guidance office or library, or through the online resources listed on page 15.

Whether you call, write or e-mail, first think about what information you would like to request. For example, are there majors, sports or activities that you want to find out about? If so, be sure to ask about them.

Get organized

To make the best use of all the information you gather from colleges, get organized! One good way is to keep a folder for each college, along with a notebook with several pages for each college.

As the materials arrive or as you browse colleges' Web sites, **read carefully** with a pencil at hand. Note the things you like about a college and the things you dislike.

How does the college compare with the factors you considered earlier (pages 6-8)? Jot down any questions you have as you read, and ask yourself these questions as well:

1. Does the college have the major(s) or program(s) I want?
2. Does it have the activities and/or sports I want?
3. How likely am I to meet the college's admission requirements?
4. Will the college help me achieve my educational and personal goals?

The idea is not to make a final decision now. Instead, read and think about each college as carefully as possible. Then figure out what other information you need to gather.

There's a lot to keep track of, so **keep good records throughout the college selection process.**

Here are some suggestions.

- When you meet an admission representative, ask for his or her business card and keep it with your files.
- Whether you talk with a college representative in person or on the phone, jot down the person's name, the date and what you talked about.
- Keep copies of your test score reports and of all forms, applications and letters you send out.
- Write down the dates when you give recommendation and other forms to your teachers or counselor.

For each college you investigate, you might want to fill out a chart like the one below.

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College name _____

Name(s) of representative(s) _____

(List dates of the following)

High school visit _____

College fair/night _____

Information requested _____

Information received _____

Other _____

Comments _____

Campus visits

No publication, no matter how thorough, can give you a complete picture of a college or university. A campus visit is the best way to see for yourself what a college is like.

Advance planning with the college's admission office is important to help you make the most of your visit. Most colleges encourage campus visits, and many have special brochures and pages on their Web sites to help you plan one.

When you've decided to visit a campus, contact the admission office. Tell them the date you'd like to come and the approximate time you expect to arrive. If you want to stay overnight in a residence hall, ask if they can make arrangements. They might also be able to plan for you to talk with someone in one of your interest areas, such as a professor, coach or director of a musical group.

During your visit, try to meet with someone from the admission office or attend an information session. Take a tour of the campus, talk to students, have a meal in the cafeteria (many colleges will treat you), and pick up copies of the student newspaper and alumni magazine. Some colleges also can arrange for you to sit in on a class.

People's views about a college or university can vary widely, so try to talk to as many people as possible. Whether your visit lasts an hour or a day, you should get all your questions answered. You already may have thought of a lot of questions. Here are some you might want to add to your list. In any case, be sure to ask the questions that are important to YOU.



When you talk to students, ask ...

1. How many hours a day do you study? Is that typical of students here?
2. Are campus jobs readily available?
3. Are faculty members interested in students and accessible outside of class?
4. Do many students go home on weekends?
5. Is it easy to get involved in student activities?
6. Are the athletic facilities open to all students or only to athletes?
7. Is the food good?
8. Is it possible to study in your dorm room?
9. What's the library like as a place to study? ... to do research?
10. Do you feel challenged academically?
11. What do you like most about this college? ... least?
12. How easy is it to get the classes you want at registration?
13. If you had it to do again, would you still choose this college?

“Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?”

If you attend a class, ask yourself ...

1. Are students interested in the material?
2. Is there time for questions and discussion? Do students participate?
3. Are students prepared for the class?
4. Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?
5. Do I feel that the students are learning — either new facts or new ways of thinking about a subject?
6. Is there good rapport between professors and students?
7. Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?

As you tour the campus, ask yourself ...

1. Are the buildings in good repair?
2. Are there new buildings as well as older ones?
3. Are the computers and lab equipment up-to-date and plentiful?
4. Are there good facilities for the activities in which I'm interested?
5. Are rooms in residence halls pleasant? ... quiet enough to study in?
6. Are common areas in the residence halls attractive? Are there laundry and kitchen facilities?
7. What's the cafeteria like?
8. Are the grounds well-kept?
9. Is the setting and architecture appealing?
10. What's the surrounding town or city like? Would I feel comfortable here?



The interview

Some colleges require an interview, though many do not. If the college requires or recommends one, see if you can schedule it during your campus visit.

As with any interview, be on time. If you know you'll be delayed, call ahead. Also, review the information and notes you have on the college and prepare a list of questions ahead of time. Take the list along, so you're sure to cover everything you wanted to find out.

In your interview, you'll probably be asked about your academic background, interests, hobbies, goals and why you're interested in the college. It's natural to be a little nervous. Try to see it as a conversation in which you ask questions, too. If you do that, you'll be more likely to relax and enjoy the experience.

Here are some questions you may want to ask in your interview or when you talk with an admission counselor.

In your interview, you could ask . . .

1. What is distinctive about the college?
2. Does the college have academic programs that fit my interests?
3. Will I have easy access to computers? Where are terminals located? Will I have to pay extra for computer time?
4. Will I have access to special equipment (such as an electron microscope) as a first-year student?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college's advising system?
6. How many students will there be in the courses I'm likely to take in my first year? Are those courses taught by full-time faculty members or by graduate assistants?
7. What extracurricular activities are there on campus? What are the facilities like?
8. What kinds of campus jobs can I get if I qualify for work-study?
9. Are there new programs or facilities that will be available in the next couple of years?
10. What are the college's recent graduates doing now?
11. Is it likely I'll be admitted?
12. Is the college "need-blind" in its admission policies (see page 26)?



3. Did you sense that the college was interested in having you as a student?
4. Did you like the social atmosphere?
5. Did the campus itself impress you in any way?
6. What do you think about the quality of instruction?
7. What do you think about the academic demands and atmosphere?

If you cannot visit . . .

Sometimes it's impossible for you to visit a campus. You can still get the feel of a college by talking to recent graduates or current students who are from your area. Ask the college's admission office if they can arrange for someone to contact you.

Many college representatives travel to interview students in their homes or at schools or hotels nearby. Contact the admission office to find out when a representative will be in your area and to make an appointment to see him or her.

Also, many colleges and universities have produced videos or virtual campus tours. Check with the college's admission office or go to its Web site.

When your visit is over . . .

Write down your impressions of the college while they're still fresh in your mind. These questions may help you assess your visit.

1. Were the people you met friendly and did they answer your questions fully and candidly?
2. Were the students the kind of people you'd like to get to know?

College evaluation chart



You've gathered a lot of information from your reading, conversations and campus visits. Feeling a little overwhelmed by it all? The college evaluation chart on the following page should help you put it in perspective.

For each of the selection factors listed, evaluate each college on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). You determine whether a college or university receives a 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 on a

particular factor, such as location or academic program. In other words, a college that you evaluate as a 5 on one factor may receive a 1 on that same factor from someone else.

Now, for each factor, compare your evaluations of the colleges. Keep in mind that it's unlikely that all of the college selection factors will be of equal importance to you. Pay special attention to those you think are most important to your interests and needs.

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College names

Selection factors

Evaluate each college from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

Academic program and atmosphere				
Student-faculty ratio				
Accessibility of faculty outside of class				
Faculty teaching reputation				
Opportunities for independent study				
Opportunities for international study				
Opportunities for internships				
Academic counseling program				
Career counseling program				
Campus setting and architecture				
Academic facilities (classrooms, labs, practice rooms)				
Availability of computers and Internet access				
Library as a place to study and do research				
Cultural facilities (theaters, galleries, concert halls)				
Opportunities to hear visiting lecturers				
Opportunities to see visiting artists and performers				
Personal counseling program				
Recreational facilities (gyms, tracks, pools, etc.)				
Student health facilities				
Location of campus and surrounding town or city				
Size of student population				
Opportunities for part-time work				
Opportunities to participate in clubs, sports and activities (list all that interest you)				

Residence halls or other types of college housing (special houses, fraternities, sororities, etc.)				
Opportunities for entertainment and social life (movies, concerts, dances, coffee houses, etc.)				
Food				
Other factors of importance to you (list below)				

Financial assistance



All colleges and universities expect you and your parents to contribute as much as you can to the cost of your education. But they realize that college costs may strain your family's budget. They'll do their best to bridge the gap between what you can afford and what the college costs.

If you and your family will not be able to support the full cost of your education, you should apply for assistance. At many high-quality colleges and universities, one-half to three-fourths (or more) of the students receive financial assistance.

Although it is increasingly difficult to do so, many institutions are still committed to "need-blind" admission. This means the admission decision is made separately from the assessment of your financial aid application. In "need-blind" admission, the amount of financial aid you need will have no effect on whether or not you'll be admitted.

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Types of financial aid

Financial assistance comes in several types: grants and scholarships, loans and work-study.

Grants and scholarships are outright gifts of money. Most of the time, they are based upon need. Sometimes, though, they are awarded for academic excellence and promise, or for special achievements or abilities.

Loans are a significant part of most aid packages. They must be repaid, but most often not until after you graduate. Interest rates are usually lower than other types of loans. The payback period on college loans varies from two or three years up to 30 years.

Work-study is a part-time job on campus. For instance, you might work in the library, or as a resident advisor, lifeguard or food-service worker.

Funding for financial aid comes from the federal government, state government, private sources and the colleges and universities themselves.

Financial aid forms

Colleges determine your eligibility or need for aid on the basis of information you and your family provide on confidential forms. You can pick these forms up at your high school guidance office.

To be considered for federal grants and loans, you must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Some colleges and universities require that you use the PROFILE Form of the College Scholarship Service or the institution's own forms to be considered for the college's or university's grants and loans.

Read each college's brochures carefully to find out which form(s) to submit and when to apply for financial aid. Make sure you don't miss important deadlines, as the dates might vary. For example, merit scholarships often have deadlines that are different than those for other types of financial assistance. **Also, keep a copy of every financial aid form you send out.**

“To be considered for federal grants and loans, you must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).”

Further resources

It's beyond the scope of this booklet to outline all the sources of financial assistance. To find out more, talk to your high school counselor or refer to the books and/or Web sites listed below.

College Costs and Financial Aid Handbook

The College Board

Also see www.collegeboard.com.

Peterson's Financial Aid Kit

Peterson's, a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Also see www.petersons.com.

www.studentaid.ed.gov This is the student financial aid site for the U.S. Department of Education. The site includes resources and suggestions for every step of the process — from beginning your college search through financing your education to repaying college loans. The “Funding” section has links to information about the FAFSA, downloadable federal student aid publications, and links to information about financial aid programs in each state. This site has a Spanish language version.

www.finaid.org A comprehensive Web site, including explanations of different types of financial aid, a glossary of terms, and calculators for estimating college costs and financial aid.

www.studentaid.org This Web site, provided by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), features online financial aid brochures (some in Spanish), worksheets and checklists.

www.fastweb.com FastWeb is a searchable data base of more than 600,000 scholarships.

Application countdown

Many colleges have a variety of application options for you to choose among. The most common plans are listed below. **Application plans may vary from college to college, so read each college's brochures carefully for the exact rules and deadlines.** If you have any questions, contact the college's admission office.



- **Regular admission** Send in your application by the college's deadline. On a set date, the college will tell you whether you've been admitted. You will have until a reply date (usually May 1) to decide whether to attend.
- **Early decision** This is a plan to use only if you have a clear first choice college. Usually, with this plan, you will apply early (during the fall) and receive notification of admittance early. You also will make a commitment to attend the college if you are accepted.
- **Early action** This plan usually has an early application deadline and early notification of admittance from the college. However, you will **not** have to commit in advance to attend the college if you are accepted. The reply date is usually the same as for regular admission.

- **Rolling admission** This is the same as regular admission, except that the college makes its admission decisions as applications are received. You might receive notification of admission early, but the reply date is the same as in regular admission.

The application checklist

Now you're ready to apply to the three or four colleges you've chosen. To keep track of what you need to do and when, answer the following questions for each college to which you're applying.

Remember, it's always a good idea to start early, so you have plenty of time before deadlines. Also, it's important to give ample time to your counselor and others filling out recommendation forms.

- Do you know the deadline (if any) for filing the application? **Read all application instructions carefully!**
- Have you kept copies of all the forms, applications and letters you've sent?
- Has your official high school transcript been sent?
- Have you given the personal reference form to your guidance counselor? Has he or she completed and sent it?
- Have you given the forms to your other references (if required)? Have these forms been completed and sent?
- Have you had your ACT and/or SAT I scores sent to each college? What about your scores on SAT II: Subject Tests or Advanced Placement Tests (AP), if you are taking those tests?
- Have you checked to be sure you answered all of the questions on the application form? Have you checked and re-checked the grammar and spelling? Is your application legible?
- Have you signed your application and enclosed the application fee, if one is required? (If the fee would be a financial burden, ask the admission office about a fee waiver.)

- Do you plan to apply for financial aid? If so, have you completed and sent the proper forms (the FAFSA, PROFILE, state aid forms, private scholarship forms and/or the college's own form)?
- Have you had an interview (if required or suggested)?
- Have you checked the admission materials to see whether the college requires any further action?

When each college has evaluated your application, you'll receive a letter telling you whether you've been admitted and granted financial aid.

Have you been accepted by more than one of the colleges to which you've applied? Congratulations! Read the acceptance letters carefully to find out by what date you must accept or reject an offer.

A majority of the most reputable colleges and universities recognize the **national candidate reply date of May 1**. This means you should be allowed to wait until May 1 or until you've heard from all the colleges to which you have applied (unless you are using an early decision plan that requires an earlier reply date).

Now, of course, you'll have to choose the one you think is best. If you're still not sure, take another look at the college evaluation chart you filled out (pages 24-25). Compare your evaluations on the factors that are important to you.

If it's still a toss-up, visiting the colleges a second time may help you decide. Are your impressions the same or have they changed since your first visit?

When you make your final choice, be sure to notify the colleges you don't plan to attend. That way, they can offer your place to another deserving student.

In the end, the choice is yours alone. But if you've gone about the selection process using some of the suggestions in this booklet, you can be confident that you're on your way to receiving the college education you want.

“Read acceptance letters carefully to find out by what date you must accept or reject an offer.”

**For more pre-college planning
information and links to
Web resources, visit the
ACM Web site:
www.acm.edu**

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Chicago, Illinois 60606
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information
about the
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colleges ...*

Beloit College

700 College Street, Beloit, Wisconsin 53511
608-363-2500 or 800-9BELOIT
E-mail: admiss@beloit.edu Web: www.beloit.edu

Carleton College

100 S. College Street, Northfield, Minnesota 55057
507-222-4190 or 800-995-CARL
E-mail: admissions@carleton.edu
Web: www.carleton.edu

Coe College

1220 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402
319-399-8500 or 877-CALL-COE
E-mail: admission@coe.edu Web: www.coe.edu

Colorado College

14 E. Cache La Poudre Street, Colorado Springs,
Colorado 80903
719-389-6344 or 800-542-7214
E-mail: admission@coloradocollege.edu
Web: www.coloradocollege.edu

Cornell College

600 First Street SW, Mt. Vernon, Iowa 52314
319-895-4215 or 800-747-1112
E-mail: admissions@cornellcollege.edu
Web: www.cornellcollege.edu/admissions

Grinnell College

Grinnell, Iowa 50112
641-269-3600 or 800-247-0113
E-mail: askgrin@grinnell.edu
Web: www.grinnell.edu

Knox College

2 E. South Street, Galesburg, Illinois 61401
309-341-7100 or 800-678-KNOX
E-mail: admission@knox.edu
Web: www.knox.edu

Lake Forest College

555 N. Sheridan Road, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045
847-735-5000 or 800-828-4751
E-mail: admissions@lakeforest.edu
Web: www.lakeforest.edu

Lawrence University

706 E. College Avenue, Appleton, Wisconsin 54911
Mail: PO Box 599, Appleton, Wisconsin 54912-0599
920-832-6500 or 800-227-0982
To schedule a campus visit: 800-448-3072
E-mail: excel@lawrence.edu
Web: www.lawrence.edu

Macalester College

1600 Grand Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105
651-696-6357 or 800-231-7974
E-mail: admissions@macalester.edu
Web: www.macalester.edu

Monmouth College

700 E. Broadway, Monmouth, Illinois 61462
309-457-2131 or 800-74-SCOTS
E-mail: admit@monm.edu
Web: www.monm.edu

Ripon College

300 Seward Street, Ripon, Wisconsin 54971
920-748-8337 or 800-947-4766
E-mail: adminfo@ripon.edu Web: www.ripon.edu

St. Olaf College

1520 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, Minnesota 55057
507-786-3025 or 800-800-3025
To schedule a campus visit: 800-275-6523
E-mail: admissions@stolaf.edu
Web: www.stolaf.edu