Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................. 3

Credit Requirements ...................................................................................................... 4
   Holy Family Catholic High School Graduation Requirements
   College Requirements

Post-High School Options .......................................................................................... 5-6

College Planning Timeline .......................................................................................... 7-10
   Junior Year
   Senior Year – Application Checklist

The College Search ...................................................................................................... 11-16
   Know Yourself First
   Deciding Which College May Be Right For You
   Special Situations
      Students with Special Needs
      Student Athletes – NCAA
   College Search Websites
   The College Visit
   Admission Tests – ACT and SAT
   Building Your College List

The Application Process ............................................................................................ 17-22
   What Are Colleges Looking At?
   Admission Decision Options
   Application Overview – including Academic Resume
   Transcripts
   Recommendations
   The Essay or Personal Statement
   A note about the “Additional Comments” section
   The Interview

Paying For Your Education .......................................................................................... 23-24
   Merit-Based Financial Aid
   Need-Based Financial Aid
   Tuition Reciprocity

Appendix ...................................................................................................................... 25-37
   Ten Questions to Evaluate Your College Preferences
   College Resume Template
   College Application Worksheet
   Parent Questionnaire for College Counseling
   “The Gentle Art of Separation”
Dear Holy Family Juniors and Parents,

There will be many choices to be made throughout the coming months and now is the time to explore possibilities and make some important decisions about life after Holy Family Catholic High School! We, as your college counselors, have put together this booklet to help you find answers to many questions regarding post high school planning and to assist you in gaining further insight into what future careers, areas of study and educational options may best fit with your abilities, skills and interests. You will be asked to reflect on what you have learned about yourselves in your classes, activities and life in the community. During second semester of your Junior year, you will complete the StrengthsQuest assessment within your Leadership Institute curriculum that will further help in developing talents, achieving goals, and assisting with your post-high school planning.

We will be here to support you as you investigate and evaluate options. Though it is your responsibility to carry out this process, our purpose is to provide resources as well as to keep you organized and on task. In addition, we will actively assist you in several ways:

- College Planning information nights for parents of sophomores, juniors, and seniors will be held each fall in addition to a separate session focusing on Financial Aid.

- College Counselors will meet with both juniors and seniors in grade level groups to provide information and lay out expectations for post-high school planning.

- Juniors and their parents are strongly encouraged to make an appointment with their assigned College Counselor during the spring of their junior year and again in the fall of their senior year to keep on track with the planning process. College Counselors will be sure to see all students during these times. **Please e-mail to request an appointment!** In addition, we are available to answer questions or assist you during the school day in person, by phone, or by e-mail.

- Students and parents are encouraged to visit the Guidance Corner on the Holy Family My School log-in for a variety of information and current listings regarding college representative visits and scholarship opportunities. In addition, the Guidance tab under the ACADEMICS bar on the Holy Family website contains a wealth of information, helpful resources, and forms needed in the college search and application process.

**HOLD ON TO THIS COLLEGE PLANNING BOOKLET!!** We request your active participation by reading all materials and completing those forms indicated – they will be valuable tools in your college search and application processes!

Sincerely,

The HFCHS Counselors

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Credit Requirements

Holy Family Catholic High School Graduation Requirements - A Holy Family Catholic High School student will be awarded a diploma when 25 credits have been earned. Of these credits, 22 are required courses and 3 are electives.

Theology: 4 credits

English: 4 credits
Required courses: World Literature, American Literature, Writing I, II, and III

Speech: 0.5 credit

Science: 3 credits
Required courses: Biology and Chemistry

Mathematics: 4 credits
Required courses: Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II

Social Studies: 3 credits
Required courses: World History & Geography, American History, and Government

Health: 0.5 credit

Physical Education: 1 credit

Technology: 1 credit

Fine Arts: 0.5 credit
Note: Additional 0.5 credit is earned in Art History which is embedded in Integrated Studies (9th and 11th years combined).

World Languages: 2 credits are highly recommended, but not required

College Requirements - While each college is unique, there are some courses that colleges require or recommend. Students should always research admission requirements for their colleges of interest to make sure they are on the right track with their high school course schedules.

Most colleges will want:
- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Mathematics
- 3 years of Social Studies
- 3 years of Science
  * 1 year with a lab
- 2 years of a World Language

Selective colleges will look for:
- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Mathematics
- 4 years of Social Studies
- 4 years of Science with lab
  * (including Physics)
- 3+ years of a World Language

It is important that students do their BEST work, aiming for the most rigorous courses that they can academically handle. Above all else, the goal is for students to learn! Though ACT and SAT scores are important, a student’s GPA and course schedule will be the best predictor of their ability to handle college level work.
Post-High School Options

Most careers require education or training beyond high school. These are the options most commonly chosen by high school graduates. For a complete listing of careers and educational options, see:

http://mncis.intocareers.org – Minnesota Career Information Systems (MCIS)
User Name – see counselor for individual student login
Password – see counselor for individual student password

Four-Year Colleges and Universities –
Colleges and Universities can be either public (meaning that they receive government support and are generally less expensive than private colleges) or private (which are not supported by tax revenues). Both public and private vary in size, program offerings, and locations.

**Colleges** generally grant bachelor’s degrees though some offer master’s degrees as well.

**Universities** grant bachelor’s and master’s degrees as well as possibly offer PhD programs. Some additionally include a professional school such as a law school or medical school. Universities tend to be larger than colleges, focus more on scholarly or scientific research and may have larger class sizes.

Helpful Websites:  
www.mnscu.edu
www.umn.edu
www.mnprivatecolleges.org

Two-Year and Community Colleges –
Most two-year colleges are public and offer a less expensive and more convenient option for students wanting to receive a college education. Though two-year colleges offer AA or Associate degrees, many students start their postsecondary education at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college or university. Many four-year colleges accept community college credit though it is always best to check to see if specific coursework will transfer between institutions. Some examples of community colleges in Minnesota are:

- Normandale Community College, Bloomington
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minneapolis

Helpful Websites:  
www.utexas.edu/world/comcol/state
www.mnscu.edu

Technical, Trade and Specialty Schools –
These schools offer training for a specific occupation and usually do not offer general or “liberal arts” coursework such as English, social studies, or the humanities, etc. These schools can be public or private, and coursework can usually be completed within 2 years or less. The difference between technical schools and trade schools is that technical schools teach the science behind the occupation, while trade schools generally focus on the more hands-on skills needed to do the job. Some examples of technical, trade and specialty schools in Minnesota are:

- Dunwoody College of Technology in Minneapolis
- Aveda Institute of Minneapolis

Helpful Websites:  
https://mncis.intocareers.org
The Military –
The military offers a variety of training opportunities and requires a service commitment in return. Options include:

- Regular enlistment after high school.
- ROTC scholarships/programs that allow students to complete their education at a civilian college at the same time that they are training to become a commissioned officer in a branch of the armed services. Not all college campuses offer ROTC programs but many do.
- The service academies (U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy) require extensive application processes with stringent requirements though provide an excellent education at no cost.

Helpful Websites:  
www.careersinthemilitary.com  
www.todaysmilitary.com

Apprenticeship Programs –
These are programs that provide specific training for particular occupations. Programs are available in more than 200 skilled trades in Minnesota.

Helpful Website:  
www.dli.mn.gov/appr.asp
College Planning Timeline

Junior Year

October – December

- **October – Take the PSAT.** Colleges won’t see your PSAT scores, but your eligibility for National Merit Scholarships will be determined. In addition, the exam will give a good sense of your preparedness for the SAT in particular if you decide to take it and good practice at taking standardized tests in general. Using the information gained from this:
  - **Work on ACT/SAT testing techniques.** There are a variety of resources (classes, workbooks, CDs available) to help you become more familiar with the test and comfortable in test-taking situations.
  - **Keep your GPA up.** No piece of your college application carries more weight than your academic record and this will probably be your most important year for earning high grades in challenging courses. If you had a few marginal grades in 9th or 10th grade, improvement in 11th grade shows a college that you’ve learned how to be a good student. Many of your senior year grades come too late to play a big role on your application, so junior year is essential!
  - **Assume leadership roles in your activities.** You do not necessarily need to be a team captain or class president to be a leader. Think of how you can contribute to your activity or organization (i.e. fundraising chair or outreach coordinator) in order to make a difference. Start a club if you have a strong interest in something. Think about ways that you can contribute to your school, church or community…colleges are looking for future leaders!
  - **Volunteer at your school or in your community.** Doing community volunteer work or getting jobs during school breaks can help you learn more about possible future career options, meet interesting people, and get work experience. Colleges are looking for well-rounded students who care about the world around them.

January – May

- **Sign up to meet with your College Counselor.** Once you have some junior grades, you’ll be able to start thinking about what schools may be of interest to you. With the help of your counselor, you can start putting together a list that fits your interests and preferences, offers a range of admission criteria appropriate to your abilities/achievements, and is affordable to you and your family. In addition, you can begin to explore possible majors or careers if you would like assistance in narrowing down your possibilities.
  - **Register for the ACT/SAT.** Colleges will accept both tests though the ACT is most often taken by students in our region. The ACT (www.act.org) is an achievement test, measuring what a student has learned in school. The SAT (www.collegeboard.org) is more of an aptitude test, testing reasoning and verbal abilities. Sign up for a test at least once in your junior year. If you you’d like to improve your scores, you can spend some time in the summer building your skills before retaking your exam in the fall. Colleges will consider only your highest scores.
  - **Select senior courses carefully.** College applications will include a list of those courses you’ve chosen to pursue in your senior year. If you can study a subject in greater depth than what’s required, do so. Continue to take courses with a rigor level appropriate to your abilities. Decide now to avoid the “senior slide”!
- **Take AP exams as appropriate.** If you can take AP exams in your junior year, they can be a huge plus on your college applications. Senior year APs are great for earning college credits, but they come too late to show up on your college applications.

- **Request letters of recommendation.** At the end of your junior year, you will be requesting 2 letters of recommendation from teachers in the major academic areas. Applications differ in their requirements; often letters of recommendation are not required but highly recommended. Asking your teachers in advance is respectful of their time and talent and will give them a chance to thoughtfully consider the letter or perhaps even write it over the summer (see specifics of submitting LORs below). In the fall, when your applications are complete, be sure to send a thank you note!

- **Start to create your Academic Resume.** (See ACADEMIC RESUME TEMPLATE in the forms section of this booklet). It is in your resume that you add greater depth to your application by highlighting your contributions and demonstrating areas of leadership, commitment, service, and responsibility. If you see opportunities for additional leadership or commitment, consider spending time over the next few months in deepening your contributions. Give a copy to the teachers who will be writing your letters of recommendation. In addition, your resume will help you when you begin to fill out college applications in the fall; they will be asking you for the same information.

**June – August**

- **Visit colleges and browse the web.** By the summer after your junior year, you will want to begin putting together the list of colleges to which you’ll apply. Browse the web to learn more about colleges and if they will be a good fit for you! Take advantage of virtual tours, but most importantly, visit the college campus you are interested in whenever possible.

- **Make the most of your summer.** A well-spent junior summer can take many forms – employment, volunteer work, travel, summer programs at colleges, and/or sports and music camps. If your summer plans introduce you to new experiences and make you challenge yourself, you’ve planned well!
Senior Year

September – December: YOUR APPLICATION CHECKLIST

➢ If you plan to apply for need-based financial aid, fill out the FAFSA after October 1.

Step 1: FINALIZE YOUR COLLEGE LIST

☐ Meet with your college counselor: Please meet with us to review your college list. We want to be sure you have good college options distributed between “safety schools, “target schools” and “reach schools”.

Step 2: REVIEW YOUR ACT/SAT SCORES

☐ Both ACT and SAT provide fall testing options: If you have not tested or would like a chance to improve scores, sign up at www.act.org or www.collegeboard.org.

Step 3: ORGANIZE APPLICATIONS, DEADLINES AND COMPLETE APPLICATIONS

☐ Carefully review the specific application instructions and deadlines for each institution to which you are applying. Be aware of your deadlines, especially for Early Action/Early Decision/or Priority Deadlines.

For Common Applications Schools:
☐ Is there a Supplement to the Common App?

For Non-Common Application Schools:
☐ Locate the link for online application.
☐ Do you need an essay? Do you need letters of recommendation? Forms to be filled out by your College Counselor?

☐ Our School Code is: 242-548

Step 4: THE ESSAY OR PERSONAL STATEMENT

☐ Complete Essay: Your essay is your chance to introduce yourself personally to the admission committee. You are more than classes and grades, test scores, or even activities. Your essay will make the connection between you as reflected on your transcript and you the person you are: future college student. Be honest, sincere and personal. The essay is your writing sample. Be creative! Proof for accuracy! See your English teachers or college counselors if you need any help.

Step 5: ACADEMIC/ACTIVITY RESUME/ME SHEET

☐ Complete your academic/activity resume using the template we have given you. Also, if you are applying to a more selective college, you need to complete a “Me Sheet”. A Me Sheet might be one page, and a list of comments about yourself, information that is not listed on your academic resume. See your college counselor for more information if you need to complete one.

Step 6: REQUEST TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS (at least four weeks in advance)

☐ You must give the teacher a copy of your Academic Resume. Add any additional information you wish them to know about you. This is the time to brag about you!

☐ Give your recommender a completed Letter of Recommendation Request Form. Your teachers will submit your letters of recommendation in 1 of three ways – it is up to you to let them know where your letters will be going and how they will get there:
o If you are using the Common Application you are required to submit Teacher Evaluation Forms and a Counselor/Secondary School Report form. You will “invite” 2 teachers and your college counselor on your Common App and they will in turn submit their forms/letters online.

o Other colleges not using the Common application may have forms to print out or require teacher recommendations. Provide your teacher with an addressed, stamped envelope with a Holy Family return address.

o Many colleges now have an online link or invitation system if they do not use the Common Application. Either invite your recommenders or provide them with the online link to upload their recommendations.

☐ Don’t forget to thank your recommenders!

**Step 7: SUBMIT APPLICATIONS ONLINE**

☐ When all applications are completed, Proof! Proof! Proof! Double check that you have completed all the sections of the application. It is best to submit before the actual college deadline. Then hit SUBMIT.

☐ When you submit, you will pay your application fee online with a credit card.

**Step 8: REQUEST TRANSCRIPTS TO BE SENT**

☐ If you are applying to a college through the Common Application or the SENDedu system, your counselor will submit your transcript. All other transcripts must be sent via Parchment by the student. Instructions for registering are on the HFCHS website and within this College Planning Guide booklet. If you have questions, see your college counselor.

☐ The website is: www.parchment.com

**Step 9: SEND TEST SCORES**

☐ Students are responsible for sending their test scores directly from ACT or SAT to each college to which they are applying. Send your best scores – typically your best composite but also subscores that represent your best abilities! [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

**January – February**

- If your colleges require it, fill out the CSS Profile for financial aid.
- Submit the last of your applications.
- Send mid-year grade reports (through your Parchment account) to colleges that require them.
- Stay focused on your academic work!

**March – June**

- Make final campus visits if needed in making your decision. Many colleges host “Admitted Student Days” for this purpose.
- Send in confirmation and housing deposit.
- Notify colleges of your decision to attend or to not attend. The National Candidate Reply Date is May 1.
- Fill out Holy Family’s College Acceptance Form and turn it into the front office.
- Send your final transcript and verification of graduation (through your Parchment account) to the college you plan to attend. **Congratulations on all of your hard work!!**
The College Search

Know Yourself First

There are a number of factors to consider as you begin to examine your post-high school options. In order to choose a college or begin to explore a career path, you have to know yourself, your interests, goals, dreams, strengths and weaknesses. Making an honest assessment will help you to begin your college search. It’s important to remember that although you will be going to college to further your education, your college campus will be your “home” for 4 years.

The following questions can help to reveal the qualities that you should look for in colleges and assist as you put together your college list.

- How do you want to grow and change in the next few years? What kind of environment would stimulate the growth that you would like to see?
- What do you enjoy learning about? Are you more verbal and perhaps enjoy more subjective areas such as literature or history – or do you prefer more applied areas of study such as science and math?
- What degree of academic challenge is best for you? What balance of study, activities and social life suits you best? Do you want an academic program where you must work and think hard, or one where you can make respectable grades without getting stressed out? How important is it for you to perform at the top of your class? How well do you respond to academic pressure and competition from others?
- How much structure and direction do you need?
- What interests do you want to pursue in college? Do your interests require any special facilities, programs, or opportunities? How competitive will it be in order for you to be involved? How important is it for you to be able to nurture these interests, participate or compete at the college level?
- How would you enjoy living in a different part of the country? How often do you want to be able to go home?
- What kinds of surroundings are important to your well-being? Are there certain places, activities, environments, weather or pace of life that make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-paced lifestyle where you can join a wide variety of organizations or activities, or do you need a more serene and relaxed environment where you can spend time alone or go your own way?
- Do you enjoy being a part of large groups of people or do you need a more personal environment?
- How would you feel about going to a college where the other students are quite different from you? Would you find this exciting or possibly intimidating?
- How important are the opinions of your parents, teachers, and friends in choosing a college? How important are the factors of college prestige or reputation?
- How important is costs when looking at colleges? Have you and your parents talked about how your college education will be financed? How important will financial aid and/or merit scholarships be in choosing where you might go to school?

Honest answers to these questions will help you to understand yourself a bit better and can often be the first step in selecting the right set of colleges!
Deciding Which College May Be Right for You

There’s no magic formula for choosing a college, but there are steps you can take to find a good fit. By considering the following factors, you will be better prepared to put together a list of colleges that have the qualities that will better enable you to learn and grow.

Size of Campus - Colleges and Universities come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and what is best for you will depend on many factors. Whether you seek a two-year college, four-year college, public or private, the following is a brief description of what you may encounter:

- **Large Schools (15,000-40,000+)** – usually offer many majors, possibly with opportunities for research. There can be a large variety of activities, large libraries, and possibly some large class sizes. Often times larger schools are located in urban areas and have intercollegiate sports teams that play at the D1 level. Of note is the fact that housing can sometimes be an issue because of larger enrollments.
- **Medium Schools (5,000-15,000)** – usually offer smaller classes and more personal attention, fewer majors, smaller libraries, and fewer activities…but they may provide a better opportunity for participation in student activities and sports.
- **Small Schools (fewer than 5,000)** – usually offer smaller, more personal classes and perhaps closer contact with professors. Majors are more limited, but there may be added opportunities for participation and leadership in athletics and social groups. Some schools develop consortiums with nearby schools to enlarge academic and extracurricular opportunities.

Preparation Requirements – Most four-year colleges have specific coursework that they want prospective students to have completed before entering. These preparation requirements can vary from college to college, so it is always best to check directly with the college that you are interested in for specifics.

Majors – It is absolutely fine to begin your college search without having an idea about what you might like to eventually major in. In fact, many colleges have a liberal arts focus with the belief that students and their interests are changing and maturing during their early college years and that in college they will be exposed to many areas of education that they had no experience with at their high school. The exception to this approach is for those majors that require focused study throughout college. For example, most engineering majors start working on that major as soon as they start freshman year. It is a good idea for all students (and imperative for students with focused courses of study) to make sure that those colleges on their list offer a wide variety of majors that they may potentially be interested in pursuing. Take it a step further and look to see how strong those particular departments are on that campus.

Admission Standards – Research college profiles and compare your academic record and standardized test scores with the high school performance of recently admitted students. Admission decisions for most colleges are usually based on the quality of academic preparation in high school. Given how you compare with recently admitted students, will that college provide you with an appropriate level of academic rigor?

Campus Life – Since this is where you may spend four years of your life, you will want to find a campus that offers you a comfortable atmosphere and provides you with an intellectual and social climate that meets your needs. Some factors to consider:
- Liberal or conservative; homogenous or diverse
- Recreational facilities and social activities
- Greek life – sororities and fraternities
- Athletic facilities and opportunities
- Religious affiliation and ability to worship
- ROTC
- Campus safety
Costs/Financial Aid – Consider total cost including tuition, fees, room and board, books, spending money and travel expenses. This is also referred to as the comprehensive fee. Examine the college’s track record of providing scholarships, loans, and other financial assistance. Do they provide both need-based and merit-based aid? You may also want to look at the amount of annual cost increases for tuition, fees, and room and board.

Special Situations

Students with Special Needs –
A wide array of postsecondary education options exists for all students, including students with physical, cognitive and/or learning disabilities. As with all students, students with disabilities should find as much information as possible about each option before making an enrollment decision. Today many colleges and universities offer comprehensive support services for students with special needs – however, there is a wide range of delivery methods and costs. The best way to understand how schools provide support is to contact the colleges, ask questions and best of all, visit and meet with support service staff at those institutions. Your college counselor can also help in providing information and options. In addition, students with a disability may qualify for accommodations on the ACT/SAT college entrance exams. For details, visit http://www.actstudent.org/regist/disab/chart.html and/or http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/for-students-with-disabilities or talk to a HFCHS Learning Specialist.

Peterson’s ‘Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities’
http://www.heath.gwu.edu
www.ahead.org
http://www.thinkcollege.net/

Student Athletes – NCAA Eligibility
The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has established rules on eligibility, recruiting and financial aid for students looking to participate in college athletics. The NCAA membership creates rules in three separate divisions that determine an individual’s eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics. Prospective student-athletes must meet minimum academic standards and amateurism criteria to play college sports with the NCAA Eligibility Center administering the process for prospects seeking initial eligibility.

Students who wish to participate in Division I or II athletics must register with the NCAA Eligibility center at the completion of their Junior year. Additionally, students must request their high school transcript be sent to the NCAA Eligibility Center and have their test scores sent directly from the testing agency. For more information and to register, go to: www.ncaaeligibilitycenter.org

For student athletes who do not plan to participate at the Division I or II college level:

Helpful Websites: www.naia.org
www.collegestudentathletes.com
College Search Websites

There are many Internet or written resources available to parents and students researching college options. See your college counselor or check out these websites on the Internet:

http://mncis.intocareers.org – Minnesota Career Information Systems (MCIS)
   User Name – see counselor for individual student login
   Password – see counselor for individual student password

MCIS is a website that Holy Family uses to help explore and search for career and educational information. It is user friendly and a great tool for students that can be used to do the following:
- Learn about over 520 occupations
- Develop a personal portfolio
- Research colleges, universities, and career schools
- Find scholarships and financial aid
- Improve job search skills and create a resume
- Take practice ACT and SAT tests

https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org – very comprehensive college search and information website which can be personalized for each student.

www.princetonreview.com – (under the College tab, Schools & Majors)

http://collegeapps.about.com/od/collegeprofiles - Provides a basic profile of many colleges including ACT/SAT score ranges of admitted students. Check out the What Are Your Chances? (Cappex.com) link to see a scattergram that lets you compare your GPA and ACT/SAT scores to recent applicants.

www.collegeconfidential.com

In addition, go the website of the college you may be interested in for information on all aspects of that school including, in many cases, virtual tours of that college campus.

The College Visit

The best way to get to know a college is to visit the campus. What has been more of a fact-finding, objective process will become more of a subjective and emotional one once you spend time on the campus. The visit will enable to you determine if the colleges that look good on paper feel good in person. Conversely, some colleges may become more attractive than they seemed to you once you are actually there. Colleges offer a number of opportunities for formal and informal visits. You should call or e-mail the admission office before coming to campus to register for information sessions, campus tours, visits to classes and lecture halls, and housing tours. If you would like to meet with an admission officer, be sure to set up an appointment before you arrive on campus – some admission offices may take “walk-ins” but most adhere to appointments. Colleges typically offer Open Houses in the fall and spring, though these are generally informative but not as personal. 17 private colleges in Minnesota also offer the Minnesota Private Colleges Week during June of each year (go to http://www.mnprivatecolleges.org/mpcw ), giving students and parents the opportunity to compare a variety of different private schools in a short amount of time.

Plan to visit no more than two colleges in one day. Each visit takes about 2-3 hours. If possible have a meal or snack on campus to get an idea of the food they serve. Pick up a student newspaper and visit the student union or sports facilities. Immediately following your visit, jot down your impressions of the college. What did you like and what did not appeal to you? Can you see yourself living there?
Admission Tests

Most four-year colleges require that you take either the ACT or the SAT college readiness assessments. Colleges will accept both tests, though the ACT is most often taken by students in our region. The ACT (www.act.org) is an achievement test, measuring what a student has learned in school. The SAT (www.collegeboard.org) is more of an aptitude test, testing reasoning and verbal abilities. Sign up for a test at least once in your junior year. If you’d like to improve your scores, you can spend some time in the summer building your skills before retaking your exam in the fall. Colleges will consider only your highest scores which should be sent directly from the testing agency.

SAT Testing Dates 2016 - 2017

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Register at www.collegeboard.com
Be sure to check registration deadlines!
*Late registration and standby registration is available for an additional fee. Visit http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees.html for more information about late registration.

ACT Testing Dates 2016 - 2017

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Register at www.act.org
Be sure to check registration deadlines!
*Late registration and standby registration is available for an additional fee. Please visit http://www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html for more information.

Test Prep –

- Practice tests online (some are free while others require a fee)
- A test prep book from the library or from a bookstore (i.e. Kaplan or the Princeton Review)
- Workshops/classes offered through area community education or by various companies, i.e. Sylvan, Huntington
- Private tutors
Building Your College List

With more than 3,000 colleges and universities across the country, you will possibly discover many options from which to choose. Some are well known, if not possibly famous. Others will be new to you. Regardless, most have something of value to offer.

Among them, your “best college” is the one that is right for you. It is a quality option if for no other reason than it is the college that will best meet your needs. It fits.

The college that is right for you is one that will:

1. Offer a program of study to match your interests and needs;
2. Provide a style of instruction to match the way you like to learn;
3. Provide a level of academic rigor to match your aptitude and preparation;
4. Offer a community that feels like home to you; and
5. Value you for what you do well and what you hope to do in the future.

As you consider colleges, start with an understanding of fit from a perspective that is centered on your sense of self. How does each college you encounter measure up against these elements of a good fit? If there is more than one school that seems to fit, that is great! Not only will you improve your odds of gaining admission to those colleges, you will be more likely to graduate from that school!

A typical college list has 3 to 7 schools balanced across the following 3 categories:

Safety Schools – Colleges that have many of the features you find appealing and that you feel very confident about given what your application says about you and what that school’s admission criteria is….meaning that you have a 90% chance of getting in.

Target Schools – Colleges that are of great interest to you and at which the possibility of admission is probable…meaning that you have a 75% chance of getting in.

Reach Schools – College that have features that are important to you but present more of a challenge…meaning that you have a 50% or less chance of getting in. Applying may be well worth the try!

Applying to schools from each of these three categories will help you manage your expectations throughout the admission process…and it will ensure that you set ambitious goals yet also give yourself some great back-up options. Remember: When applying to colleges, look to those that you not only want to get accepted to but that you would like to ATTEND!
The Application Process

What Are Colleges Looking At?

- **Grade Point Average** – provides a quick indicator of how a student has done in high school and is a predictor of a student’s success as a college freshman. Your GPA will be considered along with the Holy Family school profile in order to be able to compare you with other applicants.

- **Difficulty of Curriculum** - Selection committees are looking for rigorous courses – honors classes, AP classes and other accelerated courses. They look closely at the core academic subjects of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, but foreign language, computer classes, and technology are important too! If you did not start out academically strong as a freshman, an upward trend in grades speaks well for your continuing maturity, motivation, and acquisition of skills. Though grades will only be considered through the junior year for most college acceptance decisions, the rigor of registered senior coursework is very important as are the mid-year and final transcript reports from senior year.

- **Test Scores** – The importance of test scores in the admission process varies from college to college and depends on an institution’s admission approach and policies. In general, admission tests apply a common standard to everyone and help colleges evaluate and compare the preparation of students who go to different high schools. It is important to remember that test scores are just one part of the college application.

- **Extracurricular Activities** – are an important part of an application. Selection committees want to know that students have interests and involvements outside of the classroom and are looking more for commitment in your pursuits rather than a huge number of activities. Your contributions to the world around you as well as examples of leadership roles you’ve taken are strongly considered. Think quality rather than quantity.

- **Recommendations** – if part of the application, are an important part in the selection process. Make sure that you ask people who know you well, and that you give them enough time to do a good job for you. Plan well for your recommendations by first selecting teachers in one of your 4 core academic subject areas who are familiar with your character and work. Well-written letters of recommendation can add depth to your application as well as explain inconsistencies or trends that may appear on your transcript.

- **Essays or Personal Statements** – For colleges that require them, they are looking for something unique…something that sets you apart from the hundreds of other essays that are being read. Most importantly, be genuine…the essay adds depth to your application by giving the admission committee a snapshot of you who are as a person (see specific writing tips and ideas included in this booklet).

- **Demonstrated Interest** – In general, colleges want to extend offers of admission to students who are sincerely interested in attending. Taking a campus tour, interviewing, or contacting your admissions representative can sometimes improve your chances of being accepted. Be genuine in your interest and reach out with a purpose of learning something meaningful about the academic program, student experience, or application process.

- **Interviews** - are sometimes a part of the admission decision. Be prepared, be positive, and be ready to “sell yourself”. This is your time to shine.

- **Overall, do your best on your application** – Make it neat, readable and complete. If someone on a committee sees that you have put the time and effort into your application, they will come away with a more favorable impression of who you are as a student and a potential member of their freshman class!
Admission Decision Options

**Regular Decision** - Most colleges have a particular deadline for the receipt of applications ranging from January 1 and on. California state school and a handful of other schools have a deadline earlier than this. In this type of admissions plan, the college informs applicants about admissions any time before April 15, and the student is asked to respond to an acceptance notification by May 1. A sizeable nonrefundable deposit is usually expected.

**Early Decision** - In addition, many colleges have an early decision plan, involving a signed commitment from the student that he/she will withdraw all other applications and will attend that school if accepted. The admissions committee will review the student's application earlier than those of students applying regular decision, and the committee will usually inform the student of its decision four to six weeks after the deadline. A student can submit an Early Decision application to only one college. This is a good policy to take advantage of if you are absolutely sure the college is your first choice and if you are in a position to submit all your credentials by the deadline, which usually ranges from November 1 to January 1.

In recent years, a number of schools have added a second round of Early Decision called ED II. Colleges act on an Early Decision application in one of three ways: accept, defer, or reject. Defer means that the student's credentials will be reviewed again in the spring with the pool of applicants applying under regular decision. If a student is deferred, he/she is no longer committed to attending the college.

**Early Action** - This plan is like Early Decision, but it is different in one important way. There is no commitment on the part of the student to attend if accepted. As in Early Decision, it is expected that you are very serious about attending the school to which you are applying, and that you have done the research necessary to establish that this is the school that is right for you.

PLEASE NOTE: Some schools require that you do not apply to any other early action, early decision, or early notification program. This may be called *single-choice early action*.

**Rolling Admission** - Applicants' credentials are reviewed in the order in which they are submitted, and students are notified of an admissions decision usually in 4-8 weeks. Although a college with this policy accepts its applicants early, the students do not have to notify the college of their decision until May 1. Many schools that have rolling admissions actually use a more modified rolling policy, waiting until they have received a certain amount of applications before reviewing them, thus the 4-8 week reply date may not always hold true.

**Open Admission** – Students are generally admitted upon application (ex. some community colleges) although some programs may have more selective admissions.

**Deferred Decision** – Often a decision is delayed until the college or university receives more information about the applicant to make a final decision, such as the candidate’s mid-year report or the submission of new test scores.

**Deferred Admission** – Some colleges or universities will permit a student, after being accepted, to defer or postpone their admission for a semester or gap year in which that student will pursue other plans.

**Wait List** – If a college places you on their waiting list, let the admissions office know that you are still interested if you have your heart set on attending. Take this opportunity to provide additional information to the school that will demonstrate your interest, motivation and qualifications.
Application Overview

Now that you have found a number of colleges to consider, how do you apply? The application process usually begins early in the senior year so it is important to have completed most of your research before that time.

❖ A Note About Your ACADEMIC RESUME: During the summer before your senior year, complete your ACADEMIC RESUME (see template in the APPENDIX section at the back of this booklet). A well-thought out and complete resume will assist you greatly in filling out your applications, provide your recommenders with a comprehensive view of your high school career, and help you to consider what you bring to the table as a college applicant. If you are applying to any colleges that do not ask for much of the information that is included on your resume, you may still want to attach it as part of the application so that the college then gets a broader perspective of who you are.

Most colleges have very sophisticated websites with on-line applications or options to use the Common Application. The Common Application (www.commonapp.org) is used by over 400 colleges and is a standardized format and distribution for basic student information that you only need to complete once and can send to any number of colleges that accept it. A personal statement is also included your Common Application as well. Many colleges will additionally ask that you complete a supplemental information portion that may include short essays that give them a better idea about your unique qualities. When using the Common Application, pay close attention to the unique requirements of each institution such as the need for letters of recommendation, supplements, etc.

When applying to public colleges or universities, you may find that their applications are fairly simple to complete, possibly including a basic information form, transcript, list of senior classes and ACT/SAT test scores.

Be extremely diligent about proofreading all of your information before hitting the “submit” button! Take this process very seriously as everything you send to a college is a direct reflection on you! Before you begin, you may also want to access your Facebook account and delete any photographs or comments that are unflattering and could render a negative impression from an admissions committee. Yes…some do check this information!

Always remember to follow directions thoroughly and carefully. Make sure to submit all the required documents to complete your application file!

Transcripts

You will be sending your Holy Family transcripts through PARCHMENT which is an online exchange linking high schools with post-secondary institutions to create an easy and secure way to send your transcripts.

1. Go to www.parchment.com
2. Click on "Create an Account" if you have not already registered and follow the instructions.
3. Fill out everything with an asterisk(*). You do not need a registration code or to use your social security #.
4. When you are registered, click on the MY TRANSCRIPTS tab and follow the instructions in entering our high school name.
5. To order transcripts, click on the SEND TRANSCRIPTS tab and you will see how to search and select the colleges you wish to send your transcripts to. When you have added all the colleges, select continue and it will take you to the payment page.
6. After ordering your transcripts, you will be able to click on the Track Tab and see when your transcripts have arrived at their destination.
7. Transcripts are updated at semester time and at the end of the school year. Holy Family will notify you so you can send semester grades and submit your final transcript at the end of the year.
Recommendations

Many colleges require or recommend (translate as require) that your application package includes two to three school-related recommendations. Often you are asked to include two letters from academic teachers and a letter from your school counselor. Ask a teacher who is very familiar with your work and will emphasize your qualities that are of the most interest to the institution. For example, if you hope to capitalize on your special interests and talents in science, request a letter from a science teacher letting him/her know of your future plans. Occasionally, you may want to include a special recommendation from a coach, activity advisor, or non-academic teacher who can provide an exceptional view of a particular area of interest or strength.

Discuss your recommendation with the person you ask to write for you and provide the writer with specific information. Provide your recommender with a copy of your completed ACADEMIC RESUME in order to give them a more wholistic view of who you are as a student and a person!

Your teachers will submit your letters of recommendation in 1 of three ways – Provide a completed LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION REQUEST FORM to let them know where your letters will be going and how they will get there. Carefully check each application to confirm preferred method of delivery for LORs:

- If you are using the Common Application, you are required to submit Teacher Evaluation Forms and a Counselor/Secondary School Report form. You will “invite” 2 teachers and your college counselor on your Common App and they will in turn submit their forms/letters online.
- Other colleges not using the Common application may have forms to print out to include with teacher recommendations or may simply request a letter from one or two teachers. Provide your teacher with an addressed, stamped envelope with a Holy Family return address.
- Many colleges now have an online link or invitation system if they do not use the Common Application. Either invite your recommenders or provide them with the online link to upload their recommendations.

Always remember to thank your recommenders with a note or e-mail! Showing appreciation for those who help you is a great habit to get in to!

The Essay or Personal Statement

When a college application requires it, your college essay provides a wonderful opportunity to share your thoughts with the college admission committee and lets them see another side of you. Your essay makes you more than just a name, a transcript, a GPA, a test score, and a list of activities. The essay provides that college with another way in which to evaluate your character, creativity, power of persuasion, depth of knowledge, style and mastery of standard written English. In some cases, your essay may be the “heart” that’s added to your application.

Though the college essay can sometimes be the most stressful part of college applications, it is helpful to remember that admissions committees really just want another way to know you better and discover your unique qualities. The following is a list of tips put together by the Admission Office at Carleton College:

Top 15 Essay Tips from the Readers (Carleton College, Northfield, MN)

View it as an opportunity. The essay is one of the few things that you've got complete control over in the application process, especially by the time you're in your senior year. You've already earned most of your grades; you've already made most of your impressions on teachers; and chances are, you've already found a set of activities you're interested in continuing. So when you write the essay, view it as something more than just a page to fill up with writing. View it as a chance to tell the admissions committee about who you are as a person.
Be yourself. If you are funny, write a funny essay; if you are serious, write a serious essay. Don't start reinventing yourself with the essay.

Make it fun. If you're recounting an amusing and light-hearted anecdote from your childhood, it doesn't have to read like a Congressional Act — make it fun!

Tell us something different from what we'll read on your list of extracurricular activities or transcript.

Take the time to go beyond the obvious. Think about what most students might write in response to the question and then try something a little different.

Don't try to take on too much. Focus on one "most influential person," one event, or one activity. Tackling too much tends to make your essay too watered down or disjointed.

Concentrate on topics of true significance to you. Don't be afraid to reveal yourself in your writing. We want to know who you are and how you think.

Write thoughtfully and from your heart. It'll be clear who believes in what they are saying versus those who are simply saying what they think we want to hear.

Essays should have a thesis that is clear to you and to the reader. Your thesis should indicate where you're going and what you're trying to communicate from the outset.

Don't do a history report. Some background knowledge is okay, but do not re-hash what other authors have already said or written.

Answer each school's essay individually. Recycled "utility essays" come across as impersonal and sanitized.

The one exception is an essay written for and submitted to Common Application member schools.

Proofread, proofread, proofread. Nothing says "last-minute essay" like an "are" instead of "our" or a "their" instead of "they're."

Keep it short and to the point.

Limit the number of people from whom you request feedback on your essay. Too much input creates an essay that sounds as though it has been written by a committee or results in writing that is absent your own voice.

Appearances count. Formatting and presentation cannot replace substance, but they can certainly enhance the value of an already well-written essay.

A note about the “Additional Comments” section:

Most college applications have an Additional Comments section that can be used to provide additional clarification or expansion on important details of your application. Use this opportunity to highlight information that is not presented elsewhere on the application. In many cases, you should use this section to explain any extenuating circumstances that created a negative impact in your grades. When that is the case, it is not only important to highlight the situation that affected your grades, but to also describe how you improved your grades. Taking responsibility for a grade drop is important, but you should also show how you were motivated to overcome the challenges that you faced.

Some “special circumstances” covered in this section may be deeply personal. You may choose to discuss a medical condition or a family situation. Keep in mind that while revealing this information may be private or difficult, it is important for colleges to know what affects your life. Perhaps your parents have recently experienced a loss of income which has necessitated you choosing to take an after-school job over participating in a club or athletics. Maybe you have experienced illness or loss in your family and this has, for a time, affected your grades. Whatever the situation, know that college admissions officers need to be able to see a complete picture of who you are.

If the colleges you are applying to are truly taking a “wholistic” approach in reviewing applications, then providing this information is just one piece of the puzzle they are trying to put together to get a good picture of who you are. If you leave out a major piece of information, then the picture will not be complete and they won’t have all of the information they may need in making their decision.
The Interview

Sometimes the more selective colleges and universities require you to interview with one of their admission representatives or an alumni representative from your area. Some schools may give you the option of participating in an interview. If at all possible, accept this invitation as a great way to demonstrate your interest in that college. If you do participate in an interview, here are a few guidelines to help you prepare:

- Arrange your interview with the college admissions office well in advance (especially during the busy fall season) by phone call or e-mail.
- Be prompt in arriving for your appointment and dress appropriately for the occasion.
- Being a bit nervous is only normal. However it helps to keep the interview in perspective as it is just one aspect of your application. Maintain your sense of humor and appreciate the fact that the college official may be equally anxious to make a good impression on you!
- Try to be aware of your non-verbals – a warm, firm handshake, good eye contact, sitting up straight, good manners, and an attentive facial expression will all do much to convey a positive interest.
- Prepare yourself with a good basic knowledge of the school and a list of questions that you’d like to ask. Remember, the interview is as much an opportunity for you to find out about the school as it is for your school interviewer to find out about you. Be prepared to talk about why you are interested in attending that particular college or university.
- Most of all, be genuine and sincere and don’t forget to send a thank-you note to your interviewer after you meet!!
Financial Aid – Paying For Your Education

Financial Aid is money awarded to students to help them pay for college. These awards can be based on one of two criteria:

Merit-Based Financial Aid - takes the form of scholarships earned based on a talent or performance in a variety of areas including academics, athletics, extracurricular involvement, leadership, volunteer work, etc. These awards often come from the particular institution but can be from foundations, scholarship organizations, etc. Merit based scholarships typically do not need to be repaid.

CRITERIA AND APPLICATION PROCESS:
- Vary widely
- Often might include some combination of ACT/SAT scores, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, special talents, probable major, background
- Check with the financial aid office at the particular colleges to which you are applying on their institution’s scholarship application process! – some colleges automatically use the admission application as the scholarship application; others require a separate scholarship application with particular deadlines
- Research other scholarship opportunities outside of the particular college. A good place to start would be:
  - www.fastweb.com
  - www.collegenet.com
  - www.collegeboard.org/scholarships

Need-Based Financial Aid - is financial aid based on your family’s financial status measured by a formula which analyzes your family’s income and assets to determine your expected family contribution (EFC) toward the cost of college. Eligibility for need-based financial aid is determined by calculating the difference between a college’s cost of attendance (COA) and the expected family contribution (EFC). Sources of aid include the federal government, state government, colleges and universities, and private sources and can come in the form of gift aid (grants and scholarships which do not need to be repaid) and/or self-help aid (loans which need to be repaid and student employment/work study which provides income from a part-time job through the college the student is attending)

CRITERIA AND APPLICATION PROCESS:
- Please see the online pamphlet updated and published annually by the U.S. Department of Education which contains the eligibility criteria for receiving need-based aid from the federal government (generally state governments and individual colleges/universities follow the same criteria):
  - www.studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html
- Families are required to fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) after October 1 of the student’s senior year and every year the student is in college.
  - www.fafsa.ed.gov
  The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is calculated from the information you provide on the FAFSA according to a formula established by law. You can get an estimate of your EFC using the FAFSA 4-caster tool on the FAFSA website.
- Certain selective colleges require an additional application, the CSS Profile, in order to assess for need-based aid.
  - http://profileonline.collegeboard.com
Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Financial Aid:

1. What does the Cost of Attendance (COA) typically include?
   - Room and board, books and supplies, transportation and personal expenses

2. What FAFSA data has the most impact on the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) calculation?
   - Parents’ income and assets, household size, number of dependents attending college, and the student’s income and assets

3. Are special circumstances ever taken into account?
   - Yes, when the numbers don’t tell the whole story (ex. family situation or prior debt) or when the situation has changed or is expected to change (ex. change in employment, medical expenses, marital status). You must be able to provide documentation, ex. copies of bills, canceled checks, termination letters, etc. These issues may be addressed at time of initial application or through an appeal process if situation has changed since completion of the application.

Important Reminders:

1. Meeting deadlines is essential
   - Know each college’s priority deadlines; read and retain all the communications you receive

2. Read each school’s website or contact each school’s Financial Aid Office
   - Familiarize yourself with both merit scholarship and financial aid application procedures, deadlines, and supplemental documents needed

3. Be careful in filling out the FAFSA
   - Put name and SSN on FAFSA exactly as it appears on your social security card
   - Refer to completed federal income tax returns and consult instructions for proper line reference
   - If entry is zero or none, enter 0 – do not leave blank
   - Enter School codes
   - Student and one parent must both sign dependent student’s FAFSA

4. In comparing financial aid awards between schools, look at:
   - Cost of attendance, total amount of aid, types of aid offered, amount of gift aid vs. loans, whether the amount of work-study is realistic, if grants/scholarships are renewable and whether there are terms for renewing (ex. GPA, credits, course of study, etc.), whether aid may change from year to year

5. Be aware of reciprocity programs that offer reduced tuition at specific out-of-state institutions.
   - See information on Tuition Reciprocity below.

6. Additional websites you may find helpful:
   - Minnesota Office of Higher Education: www.ohe.state.mn.us
   - Internet System for Education & Employment Knowledge: www.iseek.org
   - FinAid! – The Financial Aid Information Page: www.finaid.org
   - The College Board: www.collegeboard.org/financialaidplanner

Tuition Reciprocity — The Minnesota Higher Education Services Office administers tuition reciprocity agreements with our neighboring states, which typically means that if you attend a public college in those states, non-resident admission fees and tuition are reduced or eliminated. Minnesota has tuition reciprocity agreements with the states of Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Minnesota also has an agreement with Manitoba, Canada and a limited agreement with Iowa Lakes Community College in Iowa. In addition, if you are a Minnesota resident, the Midwest Student Exchange Program (MSEP) provides you with the opportunity to take advantage of tuition reduction at a limited number of Midwest public and private schools and programs of study in Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska and Wisconsin. For more information or to apply, go to https://www.ohe.state.mn.us and under the PAYING FOR COLLEGE tab click on OUT-OF-STATE TUITION OPTIONS.
APPENDIX
Ten Questions to Evaluate Your College Preferences

1. **What satisfactions and frustrations do you expect to encounter in college?** What are you looking forward to? What worries you? What do you hope to gain from college? What is the overriding consideration in your choice of college?

2. **Why do you want an education?** Why are you going to college?

3. **How do you want to grow and change in the next few years?** What kind of environment would stimulate or inhibit the growth you would like to see?

4. **Which interests do you want to pursue in college?** Do your interests require any special facilities, programs, or opportunities? Consider all your interests in terms of fields of study, activities, community and cultural opportunities. Are you more interested in career preparation, technical training or general knowledge and skills of inquiry?

5. **What degree of academic challenge is best for you?** What balance of study, activities and social life suits you best? How interested are you in the substance of intellectual life: books, ideas, issues and discussions? Do you want an academic program where you must work and think hard or one where you can make respectable grades without knocking yourself out? How important is it to you to perform at the top of your class or would you be satisfied to be in the middle or bottom of your college class? How well do you respond to academic pressure and competition with others?
6. **How would you feel about going to a college where you were rarely told what to do?** How much structure and direction do you need?

7. **How would you enjoy living in a different part of the country?** How often do you want to be able to go home? What kind of change in your lifestyle and perspective might be exciting or distressing or overwhelming?

8. **What kinds of surroundings are essential to your well-being?** Are there certain places, activities, countryside, terrain, weather, or pace of life that make you happy? Do you prefer a fast-paced environment where you can join a wide variety of planned activities, or a more serene and relaxed environment where you can go your own way?

9. **How would you feel about going to a college where the other students were quite different from you? How would your react?** Do you enjoy getting to know others from diverse cultures? How open are you to those with attitudes and philosophies different from you own? Do you feel most comfortable with others like yourself? What have been your experiences in the past with others who differ in culture, attitude, race, or religion?

10. **How free do you feel to make your own college decision?** Do you or your parents agree about your plans for college? How important to you are the opinions of your parents, teachers and friends or considerations of familiarity, prestige, or reputation in your community?

Return to these questions throughout your college search process!
Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Telephone Number
yuremail@address

Education:
Holy Family Catholic High School
8101 Kochia Lane
Victoria, MN 55386
Graduation: May 2013
G.P.A. _____________

Test Scores: Best Composite ACT/SAT

• ACT (Date Taken) Composite Score:
  English: Math: Reading: Writing:
• SAT (Date Taken) Composite Score:
  Verbal: Math: Writing:
• AP Scores (listed by subject):

Honors/Advanced Coursework (9th-11th):
List Courses Here

Registered Senior Classes:
List All Courses Here

Academic Honors and Awards:
List Honor Roll Awards
List Letters/Other Academic Awards

Extra-Curricular Activities:

Athletics
Titles/Descriptions
List Accomplishments
Positions of Leadership
Awards

Music
Titles/Descriptions
List Accomplishments
Positions of Leadership
Awards

Clubs and other Activities
Titles/Descriptions
List Accomplishments
Positions of Leadership
Awards

Volunteer and Community Service:
Names of Organizations/Activities
Description of Activity
(i.e. mission trip, working at food shelf)
Responsibilities (how you contributed)
Positions of Leadership
Dates and hours/week

Grade Level:
Grade Level:
Grade Level:
Work Experience:

Company Name - City, State
Grade Level:
List ALL Responsibilities and Your Title
Positions of Leadership
Hours/week

References:

- Teacher’s Name  Subject Area  Telephone Number  Email Address
- Teacher’s Name  Subject Area  Telephone Number  Email Address

Note:
Do not be afraid to highlight the importance of your contributions! Look for areas in which you have demonstrated excellence in leadership, commitment, service and responsibility.....be recognized for the great things you have done throughout your high school career!
# College Application Worksheet

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<th>Your Responsibilities</th>
<th>College #1</th>
<th>College #2</th>
<th>College #3</th>
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<td>Average ACT/GPA range per college website</td>
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<td>Reach, Target or Safety?</td>
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<td>Common Application or College’s Own Online Application?</td>
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<td><strong>Your Responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>College #4</td>
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<td><strong>College Information - NAME</strong></td>
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<td>Average ACT/GPA range per college website</td>
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<td>Reach, Target or Safety?</td>
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<td>Applying Regular Decision, Early Decision, or Early Action?</td>
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<td>Date of chosen application deadline</td>
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<td>Personal statement needed?</td>
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<td>Additional essays needed?</td>
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<td><strong>Application Forms</strong></td>
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<td>Common Application or College's Own Online Application?</td>
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<td>Supplement?</td>
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<td><strong>Letters of Recommendation</strong></td>
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<td>Number of Letters of Recommendation needed</td>
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Parent Questionnaire for College Counseling

Student’s Name_____________________________

Parent’s Name______________________________

1. List five words that best describe your son or daughter:

2. My child’s strengths are:

3. He/she is passionate about (give an example of how you know this):

4. I think he/she will do best in the following college setting (size, location, etc.):

5. He/she is really motivated by:

6. Experiences that helped teach a lesson or sparked a new interest:

7. How well does your child deal with adversity or personal setbacks? Example?

8. Give an example or tell a short story that shows why you are proud of your child:
The Gentle Art of Separation

By Arthur S. Thomas, Director of College Counseling at the Lawrenceville School

Several years working with youngsters and parents on the college process at two different schools, and experience as a dad twice in the process (with two more to go), have left me with some thoughts that feel right to me...thoughts I pass on to my best friends and immediate family when they ask me what I “really think” or what I do when my own children go through the process. Here are some of them:

- The college process is a ritual in our families that masks a more important process: the separation. It is the end of childhood for your youngsters; they are becoming individuals with identities outside of us. It is also one of the most stressful times for them and us because it means plunging into the unknown and losing a relationship of mutual reliance that has been nurtured for the better part of two decades. I have learned to think of this process as natural, but uncomfortable. To quote Michael Thompson, a noted psychologist, “To separate after a profoundly close relationship of eighteen years duration is a significant loss for both parent and child.”

- Given the above, we parents need to acknowledge that we, not just our children, are going through an emotional transition that will likely make us anxious and in search of control.

- What is important to families in the college process is connected to what they value. That is as it should be and there are no absolute rights and wrongs when it comes to a family’s values.

- Our children are entitled to their own dreams. Left to their own devices, most kids choose dreams within their range, and almost all of them deal resiliently with the disappointment that attends not reaching a goal, especially if the important adults in their lives can accept the disappointment.

- Time spent listening carefully to what our children tell us about what they want in their future is greater than the sum of the details they are giving us. Those moments are about reassuring them that we care about more than just the result—we care about the process. We care about the context and the texture of the decisions they are making. In short, we are about who they are and what they need as they make the transition to a more independent state.

- Time spent asking our children how they feel or what they think throughout the process is time very well spent. I don’t mean questions like, “Don’t you think Princeton would meet your needs best?”—a question which would appear, to any intelligent adolescent, has only one right answer. I mean open-ended questions like: “What are your needs for college and which colleges do you think meet them?” This latter question assumes the person being question can and should answer the question. The question respects the respondent. I have learned over the years the respondent respects this questioner, too.

- The biggest difference between the majority of colleges in our nation is not the quality of the education one will receive at the various institutions. A motivated and resourceful undergraduate will get a superb education at
most of the schools Lawrenceville graduates typically attend. The greatest difference is in the tone, the atmosphere, the personal environment on will find at such disparate places as Swarthmore, Vanderbilt, MIT, Rochester, Rhodes, Michigan, Skidmore, Davidson, Furman, Grinnell, Lehigh, Smith, University of Puget Sound, Rice, Harvard, Oberlin, UNC Chapel Hill... Four years at a small, personal institution where professors know their students on a first-name basis and do not have to publish to keep their jobs is a different experience from four years at an institution with 48,000 undergraduates, teacher assistants teaching some sections, and some of the most modern and exciting scientific equipment and research opportunities available anywhere.

- One thing that transcends where our youngsters go to college is the quality of the relationship we nurture with our children as they separate from the family unit and go off on their own. It affects the depth of our relationship with our children in the future. For years I have said our children will not remember with absolute clarity whether we supported them unconditionally in the process. I believe that. I also believe that our relationship with our children in the college process will tell them if we can be trusted with their vulnerability in the future.

- Questions like “Are the colleges easier to get into than they used to be?” “What are the most selective colleges really looking for in a candidate today?” “Does needing financial aid make it harder to get into a selective college? “What particular things can a junior/senior do to separate herself from the crowd in the eyes of an admissions committee?” –while important from a practical point of view, have not been the most useful questions to me when I have dealt with the people dearest to me in this process, my own children. The question, “What do you want and need in your next step after high school?” asked in whatever way is most likely to elicit a response from that youngster, is more likely to give me the information I need to recognize the environment he or she may be seeking. Some kids are not ready for college yet, and we would not want to miss that.

- “How can I prepare my youngster to make the transition from dependence on us to a healthy independence and self-sufficiency?” is another useful question. Interaction with our children that encourages real independence and self-confidence is a huge gift, but one that is painful to give. It means trusting our children to make mistakes, or fail even, in the short term, letting us and others down in the process. In the college process this might mean letting our child meet his or her deadlines, or not, on his own, or get the essays done on time on his own. Real independence and personal self-confidence come from earned successes and from recovering from failure. If we preclude failure in our children’s lives by smoothing the path before them, we enfeeble them, we show them no respect, and we deprive them of the opportunity to grow.

Recently I, and a number of other college advisors, spent an afternoon with an admissions officer who has read folders for over a decade at one of the most highly selective universities in the country. We asked him to boil down what seems to make a difference in who is selected in his experience. What he gave us were the basics of making difficult decisions, splitting hairs so to speak.

- Quality and substance will always have the greatest impact on decisions.

- In a case where everyone’s test scores and grades are similar, the person who comes across as the most interesting in the writing portions of the application will most often be chosen.
• Being yourself in the process is your best bet, because, unless you are a superb actor, you are not likely to be better at being somebody else.

Which brings me to my last thought, an ardent plea really: **Make the college process about your relationship with your youngster.** He or she will show the colleges the best record he can; he or she will communicate who he is as effectively as he can; and, if we let him, he will be himself in the process. This will happen because, fundamentally, every youngster really wants to succeed. Some youngsters are dealing with a lot of issues that are getting in the way at this time, some are more prepared and able to “strut their stuff” at this exact moment in their lives, and some are just clumsy in the attempt, but there isn’t one who would not prefer to finish his Lawrenceville career with a flourish. It is our job as parents and as counselors to help them do that at the level each can attain. Flourishes come in many different forms and shapes—we just have to be clever enough, flexible enough, and selfless enough to recognize and celebrate them for the gifts they are.