

# ONLINE COLLEGE PLANNING SOURCEBOOK

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## I. STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS

As a student making application to colleges and universities, you have both rights and responsibilities.

### Your RIGHTS entitle you to:

- Receive full information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial aid, scholarship, and housing policies. If you consider early decision application, obtain complete information from the college about its process and policy.
- Wait to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid until you have heard from all the colleges and universities to which you have applied or until May 1, whichever comes earlier.

### Your RESPONSIBILITIES are to:

- Understand the admission, financial aid, and scholarship policies of the colleges and universities to which you plan to apply. This includes being aware of deadlines, restrictions, and other criteria.
- Before you apply, you should understand the policies and procedures of each college or university regarding application fees, financial aid and scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure that you understand the policies of each college or university regarding deposits that you may be required to make before you enroll and the dates when refunds of the deposits are available.
- Complete all material that is required for application, and submit your application materials on or before the deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.
- Follow the procedures recommended by your high school for filing college applications.
- Arrange, if possible, for interviews and/or visits to colleges of your choice.
- Notify each college or university which accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have heard from all the colleges to which you have applied or by May 1, whichever is earlier.
- Also, if you are accepted under an early decision plan which requires you to attend that institution, you must withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges or universities at the time of that acceptance and make no additional applications.
- If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, the previously mentioned withdrawal of other applications presumes you have received notification about financial aid.
- Confirm your intention to enroll and submit a deposit, if one is required, to only one college or university by its required notification date, usually May 1.
- If you are put on a waiting list by a college or university and are later admitted by that institution, you may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify any other college or university where you previously indicated your intention to enroll.

## II. MYTHS AND FACTS

Choosing a college is truly one of the most important decisions a student makes while still in high school. In many ways it is a complicated process that requires investigation, deliberation and some plain hard work. After all, there are more than 3100 accredited colleges in the United States. You probably have good information about some, misinformation about others and no information at all about the rest. Relax. Choosing a college is important and deserves your full attention. But, by taking a step-by-step approach, you can be sure of making a good decision. Let's begin by examining some of the myths that surround the college-choosing process.

- **Myth One: An Ivy or Little Ivy College Will Absolutely Guarantee the Rich, Full, and Successful Life.**

Five years out of college--and usually a lot sooner--a person's own qualities will be deciding whether he gets a raise or a promotion, is courted for another job, or has the vision to see new opportunities and the imagination to create a new career. Even if the name on his diploma helped get the first job because it was taken as evidence of his intelligence, that would be about the limit of its leverage because most people change jobs at least once in the first five years.

- **Myth Two: If You Can't Make an Ivy, a Prestige College is Next Best Because the Name on Your Diploma Will Determine Whether You Get Into a Good Graduate School or Do Something Worthwhile in Life.**

You can't get into any medical school with a C+ average from any name school, but you can with a B+ average and good Medical College Aptitude Test scores from Earlham or Knox or a host of other good schools. What counts is your record and your abilities. Furthermore, the graduate department chairman and some of the admissions committee members are as likely as not to be graduates of little freshwater colleges.

- **Myth Three: A College You've Heard About is Better, or at Least Safer, Than One You Haven't.**

This is one of the worse traps of all. There are no quality ratings of undergraduate colleges as there are of graduate programs, and a first-rate college doesn't get its name in the newspaper simply because it has an impact on a young mind and heart. The reaction of parents and students to such a place often is, "I've never heard of it." If the name is familiar because the school buys athletes and wins games, it is often more acceptable.

- **Myth Four: If You're in the Top 10% of Your Class in a Good High School and Have SAT's of 1400 or Better, You Belong in an Ivy or Little Ivy School to Get the Kind of Education You Should Have.**

It is ridiculous to suppose that any group of schools has more than a miniscule share of the quality market. Furthermore, grades and scores by themselves do not open the Ivy or other very selective doors. They can afford to look at the whole person, and mere grade grinds, being a dime a dozen for them, are cast aside.

- **Myth Five: Millions of Dollars in Unused Scholarships are Going Begging Every Year.**

This pie-in-the-sky story has been popping up every year for thirty years. It benefits the sellers of books on how to find scholarships and, with the cost of private colleges soaring, has spawned a cottage industry of so-called financial aid consultants who promise to "find" sources of aid, help fill out the college's financial aid form as adroitly as possible, or help shuffle assets around to appear eligible for aid. Buyer Beware!! The truth is that there never has been more than a fraction of the money needed and applied for every year. At least 96% of all aid is

channeled through the colleges. The financial aid office of the college that accepts you is the best place to go for help. That's what those folks want to do, free.

- **Myth Six: A Good College is Hard to Get Into.**

Anyone--whether he or she is a poor student, a problem learner, an average or a good student--can have choices of places that will help him or her grow. However unfashionable it may sound, it is the quality of the undergraduate experience, not the name of it, that powers the productive life.

- **Myth Seven: There's One College That's Exactly Right For Me.**

The chances of your finding a college that is absolutely perfect for you in every way are quite slim. You will find MANY colleges that meet some of your most important needs and objectives, and where you would be happy.

### III. FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A COLLEGE

- Academics

- College offers a wide variety of majors, or courses of study.

- Size

- Colleges range in size from 150 to 80,000 students. There is a great difference between attending a small school (1,000 - 2,000), usually referred to as a college, and a large school (20,000 - 50,000), usually referred to as a university. Small schools offer you more personal involvement, a community atmosphere, and small classes (from 5 to 50 students). Large schools tend to be more impersonal, allow you to be more anonymous, and offer class sizes of anywhere from 20 to 1,000 students. You should ask yourself:

- *Will I feel closed in and trapped at a small college?*
- *Will I feel lost and overwhelmed at a large institution?*
- *Will I feel more independent and free at a large university?*
- *Will I want large or small classes?*
- *Would I like to have a good deal of interaction with my instructors during class or would I prefer a large, more impersonal style of instruction?*
- *Are the athletic facilities important to me? Generally, the larger universities offer the greatest range of athletic sports and facilities.*

- Atmosphere

- Colleges, just like any group of people working and living together, create their own atmosphere. Each college has a particular atmosphere or environment that affects the performance and satisfaction of each student there. Some factors that go into creating a college's atmosphere are:
  - personal or impersonal handling of student questions, concerns, and scheduling;
  - an academic or less serious mood among the students and their approach to responsibilities
  - whether the school is single sex or coeducational.
- *The type of atmosphere a college offers can best be discovered by reading the catalog carefully, and, of course, by visiting the campus and talking to as many people as you can.*

- Cost

- Obviously, a major factor to be considered is the cost of attending a college. The total cost for a year, as computed by the college financial aid office, includes tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. Total costs range from \$1,000 for a community college to \$40,000 for a private school.
- **While cost is undoubtedly very important, don't limit your choice of colleges to only those you can afford without financial assistance.**

- Many of the more expensive private schools have solid financial aid programs, which may cover anywhere from 20% to the full cost, depending on your need.
- A good plan would be to choose several colleges, including one that you can afford and several for which you need aid. Although financial aid may seem uncertain at times, limiting prospective colleges on a cost basis alone may exclude some excellent colleges from your list.
- We encourage every student to apply to any of the state colleges and universities because they tend to have excellent programs at a very low cost.

- **Location**

- There are many reasons why the location of the college may be important to you.
  - **You should always consider :**
    - the expense of travel
    - the need for independence versus the desire to stay near your family
    - the effects of living in a particular climate.
    - When considering the location of a college, think about the campus setting.
  - **The physical environment of the college you go to may be very important to you.**
    - Some people prefer the social, cultural, and economic activities of a large city or metropolitan environment.
    - Others would be unhappy if they could not be near the ocean, mountains, or countryside.
    - A major metropolitan area can offer many benefits, but a student must adjust to the life-style of a big city. A college/ university which is located in the heart of a city is often comprised of multi-storied classroom buildings and high-rise dormitories.

*The decision of a location and campus setting for your college should ultimately include those schools where you will be most comfortable living for the next four years of your life.*

- **Student Body Type**

- A student body type can be comprised of all men, all women, or both men and women. Students who may worry that they would be cloistered at a single-sex college should know that today virtually all colleges have exchange programs with other colleges whereby a student from one college may cross register at another college to take courses for credit. Also dorm privileges, social activities, and extracurricular involvements will vary due to the type of student body your college has.

#### IV. COLLEGE ADMISSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Most colleges consider a blend of your academic and personal qualifications. Some consider only academic qualifications
- Almost all colleges require a high school transcript and diploma.
- The more selective the college, the more stringent the admissions requirements.
- Requirements at a college may differ for different programs or different students.
- Some colleges suggest criteria for admissions, such as SAT or ACT scores in a certain range, specific academic courses, and GPA's above some level.
- Colleges that require standardized tests usually like a balance between critical reading and math scores. Very unbalanced scores should be explainable and appropriate for the college (e.g. high math scores for engineering).
- **Academic Qualifications Are Indicated By:**
  - High school courses--substance, diversity, and level of difficulty
  - High school grades, including senior year
  - Trends in grades (steady improvement, strong 11th grade record desirable)
  - Relationship of grades to standardized test scores (high scores and poor grades undesirable)
  - Standardized test scores
  - Academic honors and awards
  - Recommendations from college counselors and teachers
- **Personal Qualifications Are Indicated By:**
  - Extracurricular activities, interests, part time jobs, community service, and hobbies (most important for the very selective colleges)
  - Long-term commitment and talent in a few activities (e.g. sports, arts, student government, community service, religious activities)
  - Recommendations from your college counselor, one or two teachers, possibly an employer--people who know you well and appreciate your strengths and potential
  - Application essays
  - Personal interviews
- **Other Considerations:**
  - Relationship to alumnus(a) An influential or a generous donor can sometimes help
  - Sibling at the college (especially if he is/was a successful student)
  - Geographic, ethnic, sex, socio-economic representation needed to balance a class
  - Number of applicants from Strake Jesuit College Prep
  - Reputation of Strake Jesuit College Prep

## V. HOW TO PRESENT A STRONG ADMISSIONS APPLICATION

- What information do you need to give to schools when you apply for admission? Generally schools ask for:
  - Personal information - name, address, date of birth, etc.
  - Official transcript - from high school (should be sealed by registrar)
  - Activities listing- non-academic interests, résumé
  - Personal statements - goal statements, essays
  - Recommendations - from employers, teachers, friends
- Admission applications come in various forms.
  - Some are simply a single sheet of paper on which you answer questions.
  - Others ask that you submit an essay, recommendations, perhaps a portfolio of past accomplishments.
  - Most require a combination of academic and personal information. Be sure to read the application guidelines carefully and contact an admission counselor if you have any questions.
- Be sure to give yourself 6 weeks or more to complete admission applications and required attachments.
  - Have a friend or family member read your application for content and to spot any errors you might have missed.
  - **ANSWER EVERYTHING and consider nothing OPTIONAL.**
  - **Seek to BEAT, not simply MEET deadlines.** This makes a strong impression on Admissions Officers.

## VI. THE ESSAY.

- Admission officers want to know more about prospective students than statistics and dry facts. Essays are an extremely important part of the admission process, simply because they are the most personal piece of the admission application. **Be sure your essay is personal not generic. The reader wants to know YOU better.**
- **To begin, you are writing for a purpose;** you are trying to convince either an admission officer, or a committee, that by virtue of your merit (academic achievement, athletic prowess, leadership interests, etc.) they should either admit you into their school. In order to accomplish this, present yourself as clearly and fully as possible. Your personal essay should be dedicated to expounding your good qualities and achievements.
- **Committees and admission officers are impressed with personal growth and individuality.** If you think that cannot possibly mean you, think again - it does. You are not the same person you were one, two or three years ago. You have matured, you probably have more family and/or work responsibilities, and you probably have become more involved in your academics and outside interests. If this weren't true, you wouldn't be thinking about attending college, and you wouldn't be reading this now. So think positively, and brainstorm!
- **Don't worry whether or not what you have to say is important enough or particular enough to catch someone's attention.** If you are writing about something that you truly care about, it will be interesting and worthwhile.
- **Ask yourself the following questions regarding your essay:**
  - *Does the introduction capture the reader's attention?*
  - *Is the verb tense consistent throughout?*
  - *Is it clear and coherent?*
  - *Is it concise enough to adhere to limits of length?*
  - *Is it free of spelling and grammatical errors?*
  - *Has another person proofread your essay?*
  - *Does it present you in a way that makes you and your parents are proud?*
  - *Would you remember this essay after reading 200 others?*
  - *Did you pay special attention to your closing paragraph and the image it cast of you?*
  - *Is it personal? Could it be about anyone but you?*
- **Pitfalls to Avoid in College Admissions or Scholarship Essays:**
  - DON'T give your life story.
  - DON'T rehash every experience in high school.

*Example: "I have been in the National Honor Society, the Speech Club, the Drama Club, the Basketball team," etc... or "I have been President of the National Honor Society, Vice-President of the Speech Club," etc.*

- DO remember that selection committees are looking for experiences in your life which have been meaningful and unique. If you have been President of the National Honor Society, how have you used it?

- DO address what changes have occurred over the years
- DON'T shy away from expressing failure. How has this failure caused you to grow and change?
- DON'T talk about obstacles from a stance of self pity. Address how you meet and overcome challenges and obstacles.
- DON'T tell the university about themselves.

## VII. ACTIVITIES RESUME

- Creating a clear, organized activities resume allows you to share what you want colleges to “get” about you. Admissions officers want to know what you have participated in besides going to school, taking the SAT and ACT, and earning grades. Here are some points to remember:
  - Colleges are impressed with students who choose an activity and then stay with it and develop it over a period of years. Demonstrate the depth and breadth of your involvement.
  - The content of your activities is not the most important aspect of your resume. You want to demonstrate that you enjoy, even love, the things that you do. Use your resume to show how you have taken an activity, e.g. writing, and pursued it in a variety of ways (writing for the school newspaper, using your skills to print out press releases for a nonprofit, participation in writing contests, etc)
  - DO NOT abbreviate or use acronyms. Not everyone knows what JAC Camp is.
  - Include how many hours you spent on your activities. This helps to put your schedule in perspective. For example, you might indicate that during soccer season you put in 10 hours a week for 16 weeks or that you spent one hour per week tutoring elementary students in math after school from August-May of your Junior year.
  - Only include involvement and awards from 9-12 grade.
  - If you have participated in a club that is unique to our school, include a short description of the club in your resume.
  - Let admissions officers know if you have served in leadership roles. Have you been Student Council President? Captain of the Football Team? Founder of a Club? Were you elected to these positions?
  - Include your work experience and any special circumstances that may have prevented you from participating in more extracurriculars.
  - Neatness counts! A resume helps to provide the first impression of you.
  - Don't overdo it. Keep away from offbeat colors, decorations, unusual typefaces, etc.
  - Don't identify yourself with “cute” or “cool” email addresses.
  - Include enrichment activities if applicable i.e. summer programs, unique travel experiences, hobbies that have enhanced your educational experience, etc.

- **Sample Resume Template:**

Your Name  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Telephone Number /email address

EDUCATION:

- Name and location of school, GPA, Standardized Test Scores

AWARDS AND HONORS:

- Awards or honors, beginning with grade nine. For each award or honor, enter the grade level in which it was earned.

SCHOOL RELATED ACTIVITIES:

- Athletic involvement, club involvement, retreat participation, etc beginning with grade 9. Be sure to include any leadership roles.

COMMUNITY RELATED ACTIVITIES:

- All community related activities beginning with grade 9. Include leadership roles. Examples of community activities are volunteer work, youth group activities, church activities, scouting, county sports activities, etc.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Summer programs, unique travel experiences, hobbies that have expanded your educational experience

WORK EXPERIENCE:

- Beginning with your most current or recent job, list your work experience including the hours worked each week and the type of work

### **VIII. STANDARDIZED TESTS**

- You have been taking tests for years. Now you are asked to take tests to determine your capacity for higher education. The SAT tests your critical reading, math, and writing skills. The SAT Subject Test and ACT test what you know about certain subjects. These tests, then, are opportunities to show your competence in specific areas.
- **Types of Tests:** There are many types of tests used for college admission, four of which are given by the same company, the CEEB (College Entrance Examination Board Test Program). You are responsible for registering for these tests and for requesting that scores be directly reported by testing services to the colleges to which you apply.
  - **SAT:** (<http://www.collegeboard.com/>) This three hour test is identical to the PSAT in format and is designed to measure critical reading and mathematical reasoning ability. Many colleges require the SAT for admission. It is recommended that you take the SAT twice, preferably in March of your junior year and in October of your senior year. Most colleges will accept your highest score.

- **ACT:** (<http://www.act.org/>): The ACT is a test required for admission at many colleges. Four 35-60 minute tests in the areas of English, math, reading, and science reasoning are given. Almost all colleges will accept either the ACT or SAT; thus, it may be a good idea for you to take both the SAT I and the ACT. The ACT should be taken during the second semester of your junior year. When taking the ACT, seniors should take the optional writing section.
- **SAT Subject Tests:** (<http://www.collegeboard.com/>) Some colleges require three subject tests (SAT Subject Test) which measure knowledge in specific areas. Each subject test takes one hour of testing time and all consist entirely of multiple-choice questions except the writing tests. You will probably do best on a Subject Test if you take it as close as possible to completing a course (or courses) in the subject, while the material is still fresh in your mind. To decide when to take the Subject Tests, find out the requirements of the colleges to which you may apply. Colleges that use Subject Tests results as a part of their admissions process often require that you take the tests no later than December of your senior year. (While many colleges will accept November scores for early decision, some may require earlier scores.)
- **AP:** (<http://www.collegeboard.com/>) In May of each year, these three-hour examinations are given to students who have completed any AP course offered at Strake Jesuit. If the student makes a certain score on the exam, college credit or advanced placement in college courses is possible. Highly selective colleges do review AP scores as a part of the admissions file and prefer to see scores of 4 and/or 5.
- **TOEFL:** Students whose first language is not English are generally required to take this exam as part of college admissions. Check with the college counselor for test dates.
- **THEA** (Texas Higher Education Assessment): This test, mandated by House Bill 2182 and passed by the Texas Legislature in the spring of 1987, provides information about the reading, mathematics, and writing skills of students entering Texas public colleges and universities. As part of the THEA program, colleges and universities are required to offer their students advisory and support services related to the THEA Test and to develop and implement appropriate remedial activities for students who do not pass one or more sections (reading, mathematics, and writing) of the THEA Test. **Students who have scored 1070 or more on the SAT (with a score of at least 500 each on critical reading and mathematics portions of the test), or 23 or more on the ACT (with a score of at least 19 each on the English and mathematics portions of the test) do not have to take the THEA.**
  - **You Must Take the THEA Test if any of the following apply to you:**
    - You are entering or enrolled in a Texas public institution of higher education (i.e., a college, university, or technical institute) as a full-time or part-time student in an associate or baccalaureate degree program and you do not meet the exemption requirements stated above.
    - You are a full-time or part-time teacher education student in either a public or private institution in Texas

- **How to Register for These Tests:** Registration forms and other information can be obtained in the Counseling Office or online (<http://www.thea.nesinc.com/>). **Make sure to always enter our school code: 443-383.** You may also want to visit with your college counselor regarding specific testing concerns. Remember, it is the student's responsibility to complete and mail the registration forms by the appropriate deadlines.

**IMPORTANT:** IDENTIFY STRAKE JESUIT'S HIGH SCHOOL CODE EVERY TIME YOU REGISTER

**443-383**

**IX. 2008/09 ACT and SAT TEST DATES**

**SAT 2008-2009 Test Dates**

REGISTER ONLINE: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

<b>2008/09 Test Dates</b>	<b>Test</b>	<b>Regular Deadline</b>	<b>Late Fee Charged</b>
October 4, 2008	SAT & Subject Tests	September 9, 2008	September 16, 2008
November 1, 2008	SAT & Subject Tests	September 26, 2008	October 10, 2008
December 6, 2008	SAT & Subject Tests	November 5, 2008	November 18, 2008
January 24, 2009	SAT & Subject Tests	December 26, 2008	January 6, 2009
March 14, 2009	SAT only	February 10, 2009	February 24, 2009
May 2, 2009	SAT &	March 31, 2009	April 9, 2009

	Subject Tests		
June 6, 2009	SAT & Subject Tests	May 5, 2009	May 15, 2009

## ACT 2008–2009 Test Dates

REGISTER ONLINE: <http://www.act.org>

2008/09 Test Dates	Registration Deadline	Late Fee Charged
September 13, 2008	August 12, 2008	August 13–22, 2008
October 25, 2008	September 19, 2008	September 20–October 3, 2008
December 13, 2008	November 7, 2008	November 8–20, 2008
February 7, 2009	January 6, 2009	January 7–16, 2009
April 4, 2009	February 27, 2009	February 28–March 13, 2009
June 13, 2009	May 8, 2009	May 9–22, 2009

## X. THE CAMPUS VISIT AND COLLEGE EVALUATION

- **The Campus Visit:** There is no better way to learn about a college or university--the faculty, facilities, spirit, atmosphere, academic environment, student values--than to visit the campus when college is in session rather than depend on a friend or the school's publicity materials. Consider it "educational insurance:"

.....*You are more likely to choose a college which is "matched" to your needs.*

.....*You will have an opportunity to evaluate what students wear, how they live, etc.*

.....*You will be able to observe where you will eat, sleep, study, attend classes, and take part in campus activities.*

.....*You are likely to do better work if you are in an environment which is congenial to your value system and needs.*

- **Tips for Your Visit:**

- **Plan your visit in advance.** Phone or write the admissions office for an appointment and indicate your areas of interest.
- **Visit when school is in session.** Avoid special event days.

- **Allow enough time to get the "feel" of the campus.** A two-hour visit should give ample opportunity for a fairly extensive tour plus a chat with the admissions office. In general, it's a good idea to limit yourself to touring two or three colleges in a single day.
  - *Does the campus appeal to you? Size? Is it easy to get around?*
  - *Will you need a car? Is parking a problem?*
  - *Is it clean?*
  - *What percentage of students live on campus? Off campus? Commute?*
- **BE PROMPT!**
- **Pick up an application and scholarship form if needed.**
- **Get a campus map** (the map is essential if the college doesn't offer an escorted tour).
- **Don't hesitate to discuss finances, including scholarships, loans, and work opportunities.** Talk with someone in the financial aid office.
  - *College Costs And Financial Aid/Scholarship Opportunities*
  - *What are the school's basic costs (tuition, room, board, fees)?*
  - *What other costs are involved in attending (books, personal, etc.)?*
  - *What kinds of financial aid programs are available?*
  - *Work opportunities? Loans?*
  - *Merit or no-need scholarships? Athletic or talent awards?*
- **Do feel free to ask for some estimate of your chances for admissions** -but don't expect any firm commitment at this time.
  - *How will the college/university be evaluating the student? What criteria is used in the process? Test Scores, GPA, rank, quota, area of study, recommendations, activities, other subjective factors*
  - *Application deadlines and procedures?*
- **Visit the College Library** . Even a ten minute visit can tell you something about the size and scope of its collections, study facilities, and specialized areas such as listening rooms, etc.
- **Sit in on a class or seminar** . **Ask questions about academics such as.....**
  - *What is the average class size for freshmen? Upperclassmen?*
  - *Who will teach freshmen courses? Graduate assistants or full professors?*
  - *What is the faculty advisor system? How easy is it to meet with advisors? How are they assigned?*
- **Visit a typical campus residence, dining hall, student lounge, and recreation area.** If there are fraternity or sorority houses on campus you may want to see one of these also.
  - *Is on-campus housing a problem?*
  - *Are freshmen required to live in a dorm?*
  - *How is housing assigned? Is there a separate housing application? Deadline? Deposit?*
  - *How are roommates assigned? Can you request a particular roommate?*

- *How many students per room? Are singles available?*
  - *Are the study facilities of the dorm satisfactory? Are there "study hours" or "quiet rooms"?*
  - *Are dining facilities of the dorm satisfactory? Is it required or optional to purchase meals?*
- **Talk with some of the students.** It's important to get some idea of the kind of people you'll live and work with on campus. If a student guide accompanies you on your tour, feel free to ask him or her about any aspect of college life.
- **Right Before Your Visit**
  - Review the school website, especially the section on Admission requirements.
  - Pick up a copy of your "Unofficial" transcript to bring along.
  - Know where you are going and allow enough time to get there.
- **Should Your Parents Accompany You?**
  - This is up to you. Parents often are interested in seeing your prospective colleges. Most colleges welcome parents; however, when they interview a prospective student they like to have some time alone with the candidate and then invite parents in for further discussion, if they wish.
- **After the Campus Visit**
  - **Write thank-you notes to the Director of Admissions or any other staff, faculty, or students who interviewed you and extended you courtesies while on campus.** This should be done promptly upon returning home. Also, thank persons from your school who have helped you.
  - See your college counselor--discuss what you have learned.
  - Review evaluations and impressions: Rank this college on your list.
- **Missing School at Strake**
  - Students are allowed to miss three days in an academic year for college visits.
  - The absences are excused only when directly related to a student's application process.
  - Before making such a visit, students should .....
    - obtain the permission of the Dean of Students and
    - file a COLLEGE VISIT REQUEST FORM at least one week prior to the anticipated absence.
  - These forms are available in the Counseling Office and in the Dean of Students Office.

## XI. SURVIVING THE INTERVIEW

- Your presence on the campus and your readiness to talk about yourself and your college plans, and to seek information about the "rightness" of the college for you are important indications of your serious interest in the college. Then, too, the exchange of information and the impressions gained on both sides -yours and the college's - during the interview should be meaningful. It is doubtful, however, that the decision on your admission will depend on what takes place during an interview. **So, take the interview seriously but don't overrate its importance.**
- Admissions interviewers generally look at THREE areas while interviewing students.
  - They are reacting to you as a possible student at their school,
  - They are observing how you react to the physical aspects of the campus and what it offers
  - They are considering your chances are for admission.
- If you request an interview with a College Admissions Officer or if the catalog states that an interview is required, you can prepare for this in advance.

- You should read the college catalog so you will know something about the school.
- Be prepared to ask questions which are not answered in the catalog.
- Your dress for the occasion should be tasteful and comfortable.
- Be mindful of your nonverbal behavior.
- The quickest way to arrange an interview appointment is to telephone the Admissions Office and suggest some convenient dates.
- **The interview is not a quiz to determine how much you know. Its purpose is to enable you to learn about the college and for the interviewer to learn a little about you.** Each college interviewer has their own particular way of conducting an interview, so you cannot predict the subject matter of the conversation nor can you remodel your personality for this special performance.
- **Any information that you have written on the application form should be confirmed at the interview.** Any discrepancy will cause the Board of Admissions to question your sincerity. The most impressive type of student is one who is confident, responsive and able to carry on an interesting, informative conversation.
- **HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE QUESTIONS:**
  - Name three adjectives that describe yourself. What things do you value?
  - What affect has media had on you?
  - What magazines do you read? Newspapers?
  - How does your family feel about you going away to school?
  - Any part time jobs? Do you enjoy the job? What do you do?
  - What's the most significant activity in which you've participated?
  - Is your school progressive? Attitudes of people?
  - How did you choose this college?
  - What major do you intend to follow? Minor?
  - What do you think people do in that field?
  - How does your high school grading system work?
  - If you're asking for financial aid - how do you plan to pay?
  - Do you enjoy your social life?
  - What's the last book you've read?
  - Has anyone explained to you about semester hours?
  - If your SAT's are low, why do you think they are?
  - Do you know what the average SAT score is?
  - What are career areas you've considered during high school?

## XII. COMMON ADMISSION DECISION DEFINITIONS YOU

### WILL WANT TO KNOW

- **Early Decision** Requires you to commit to a college or university at the time of application that, if admitted, you will enroll.
  - **You should apply under an Early Decision plan only if you know that you can make a well-reasoned, first-choice decision.**
  - Upon admission the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1.
  - You may apply to other colleges but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time.
  - Colleges will respond to requests for financial aid at or near the time admission is offered.
  - If admitted, you must enroll unless your financial aid award is inadequate.
- **Early Action** Permits you to apply to a college or university of your choice and receive a decision early in the senior year, well in advance of the normal spring response dates.
  - **Though you will hear early regarding your admission, you are not committed to attend and you may apply to other colleges.**
  - If you are applying for financial aid, you will follow the aid application deadlines set by the institution.

- You are not required to make a commitment before May 1, but you are encouraged to do so as soon as a final choice is made.
- **Regular Decision** A plan in which institutions review most of their applications before notifying the majority of candidates of their admission.
  - **In this process, colleges set a deadline for completing applications and will respond to completed applications by a specified date.**
  - If you are applying for financial aid, you will follow aid application deadlines set by the school.
  - You may apply to other colleges.
  - You will not be required to make a decision regarding enrolling before May 1.
- **Rolling Admission** A term used to describe the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are received and offers decisions to students soon after they are made.
  - If you are applying for financial aid, you will follow aid application deadlines set by the school.
  - You may apply to other colleges and you will not be required to make a decision regarding enrolling before May 1.
- **Wait List** A term used by institutions to describe a process in which they may initially delay offering or denying you admission. Rather, the institution extends to you the possibility of admission in the future.
  - Colleges offer admission to wait list candidates if insufficient numbers of regularly admitted candidates accept their offers of admission.
  - Please refer to the Statement of Student's Rights and Responsibilities for the rights which you are assured if placed on a wait list.

*Excerpted from the NACAC Guidelines for Admission Decision Options in Higher Education, approved October 1991 by the Delegate Assembly.*

### **XIII. INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING TO COLLEGES**

- **The completed application usually includes:**
  - An application form and
  - A counselor/secondary school report form from the college counselor .The form for this is supplied by the college.
  - A transcript from Strake Jesuit (Request from Mrs. Cashiola)
  - Standardized test scores (Sent directly from College Board and/or ACT)
  - Letters of recommendation from one or two teachers
  - A school profile (Sent with your transcript)
  - A Financial Aid Form (FAFSA and/or PROFILE), if needed
- **Here are some suggestions that may improve your applications:**
  - Write, email, or call each college for admission forms, as well as for financial aid, scholarship, and housing forms.
  - Ask for a catalog or view one online. Some schools such as The University of Texas at Austin may require payment for their catalogs.

- **As early as possible submit to the Counseling Office your requests for transcripts and school recommendations.** Please note deadlines for submitting materials to the colleges and allow sufficient time for the counselors to do their part and still meet deadlines.
- Be sure you have COMPLETELY filled out the forms before turning them in to the Counseling Office.
- **Be sure your name appears on all of the forms you turn in!** Students need to include an addressed envelope. Your transcript request will be processed as soon as possible, usually within five working days if all necessary information is available. Most students submit their college applications and transcript requests during the months of October through December of their senior year.
- Make certain college applications are neatly and thoroughly completed. Type or print legibly unless a sample of your handwriting is specifically requested.
- Spend lots of time on your essays. Plan them, organize them, rewrite them, refine them, and proofread them. Evaluate both for content (ideas) and composition (writing style, syntax, etc.); they can greatly influence the outcome of decisions--both positively and negatively.
- **IMPORTANT TIP: Make copies of all application forms to use as rough drafts.** Save the official copies to complete and mail to the colleges.
- When a photo is required, make certain it is a good one. Be sure to print your name and Social Security number on the reverse side.
- If submission of a photo is optional, it's best to send one. An application "comes alive" with a picture of the candidate!
- Make certain your application fee accompanies your application. Be sure to write your social security number on your check.
- Colleges usually accept scores only from the College Board or ACT directly. If you need forms for reporting scores to colleges not originally requested, come by the College Counseling Office for Additional Score Report forms. You may also call the testing agencies to request additional score reports or request additional reports online (<http://www.collegeboard.com/> / [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)).
- Keep abreast of college admissions officers' visits to Strake through SJET and the school website. The majority of college representatives will visit in September and October of the senior year. Get a permission slip if you are interested and arrange with your teachers **AT LEAST ONE DAY IN ADVANCE** for any classes you will miss because of interviews or on-campus visits here at Strake.
- Read your emails. Many college related announcements will be emailed to you.
- **Complete and submit your applications according to directions BEFORE the deadlines.** Keep your own record of correspondence, test dates, etc. Deadlines and other details vary greatly from one college to another.
- During the entire process, it is extremely important that you do not throw things away! Test score reports, application instruction sheets, information from colleges, financial aid forms and applications, correspondence with colleges, all of these are examples of material commonly lost by applicants who are

not organized. **KEEP COMPLETE AND ACCURATE RECORDS OF EVERYTHING ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROCESS. MAKE COPIES OF EVERYTHING YOU MAIL!!!**

#### **XIV. SERVICE ACADEMIES**

- The commitment and preparation to attend and complete college at the US Naval Academy, US Air Force Academy, or the US Military Academy is rigorous. It is not something that you can or should do on a whim.
- **The service academies are unlike traditional colleges and universities.**
  - You make a commitment to live a military lifestyle and take an oath of office, promising to be loyal to your country and to defend it, if necessary.
  - Commitment, discipline, organization and physical aptitude are required
  - It also requires a commitment of service beyond four years in college.
  - Applying to the academies is a thorough and lengthy process
- **This is a summary of the requirements and qualifications for those entering service academies:**
  - You must be found scholastically qualified by the admissions board. It is recommended that you have one year of chemistry and physics.
  - SAT average varies but usually averages 1300.
  - You must be medically qualified
  - You must pass a Physical Aptitude Examination.

- **You must receive an official nomination** from one of many sources –
- U.S. Senator
- U.S. Representative
- the President
- the Vice President
- **To begin:**
  - Submit a Pre-candidate Questionnaire.
  - Apply between April of your junior year and January of your senior year.
  - Apply for a nomination: Send a letter to your representative and senators as early as possible, as many begin the nomination process in the summer or early fall. *A sample letter can be obtained from the Guidance Office.*
  - Take the SAT/ACT early.

## **XV. FINANCIAL AIDE**

- When families look at the rising cost of college tuition, both at public and private schools, many become frightened and frustrated thinking about funding their son’s education. This section is a general overview of the financial aid process and how you might want to approach the task of paying for college.
- **Here are a few things to remember:**
  - **Pay attention to deadlines for filing financial aid forms. Exceptions for late forms are NOT made.**
  - The price quoted is the “sticker” price and is rarely the cost actually paid by the families.
  - In the beginning, don’t let a college’s cost determine what schools are best suited for you.
  - Remember, that while cost can be a factor, your happiness at a school should come first. Why pay if you are not going to enjoy the experience?
  - There is always money available, but some sources are harder to find than others.
  - Yes, it might be a sacrifice. Both students and parents should ask themselves whether or not they are willing to sacrifice income for a college education.
  - **If you don’t apply for aid, you won’t get any.**

- **Male students, age 18 must register with the Selective Service prior to receiving government funds.**
- Many students do not realize they may be eligible for financial aid to attend college. Financial aid is available through private, institutional, and federal student aid programs.
- **The U.S. Department of Education is the largest source of aid in the country** and the aid comes in the form of either:
  - grants (will not need to be repaid)
  - loans (must be repaid),
  - or work study (provides income from a part-time campus job).
- **Grants:** The USDE funds participating schools annually at a specified amount. The school is then allowed to award this money to students following the guidelines set by the government. Once this money is spent, it is gone. **It is yet another reason to apply early.**
  - **Federal Pell Grant** is awarded by the government through strict rules set by the Department of Education; previous awarded maximum value was \$4050.
  - **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)**
- **Federal Loans:** There are two types:
  - **Subsidized Loans:** Awarded to students on the basis of financial need. The interest portion of the loan is covered by the federal government while the student is in school.
  - **Unsubsidized Loans:** These are not need-based loans. The borrower is responsible for the interest during the entire life of the loan.
  - **To discover maximum amounts for STAFFORD, PLUS and Perkins loans, visit:**  
[www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/faq.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/faq.html)
- **Work Study:** This is employment while enrolled as a student, whereby one's salary acts as a contribution toward one's expenses and is administered by the college or university. Jobs might include manning a front desk at a library or athletic center, working in the cafeteria, or operating campus phones.
- **Demonstrating Financial Need:** Your financial need is the **difference between the cost of attendance at the school and your family's EFC (Expected Family Contribution)**. This need analysis is determined by collecting information about a family's income, assets and living expenses. The EFC takes into account the family's expenses relative to the number of persons in the household and how many siblings will be attending college during the award year. **If the EFC is less than the cost of attendance at a particular school, a student planning to attend that school is considered to have financial need.**
- **FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid)-** Every school will require that you submit the FAFSA in order to be eligible for aid. It's available online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) . Please note that it can not be submitted prior to **January 1<sup>st</sup>**.
  - Many schools will also ask that you submit the **CSS/Financial Aid Profile** (known as the Profile) which can be accessed at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
  - The CSS takes into account additional discretionary information.

- **Some schools require their own forms.** You may want to ask the financial aid officer if they have an “exceptions form” so that you can list additional financial circumstances that you would like for them to consider during their review.

## **XVI. FOUR YEAR COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE**

**Ninth Grade.** *Remember that grades earned during ninth grade DO count in terms of college admissions.*

- Careful consideration should be given to reviewing the four-year graduation plan.
- Review college catalogs, websites and publications which give college profiles.
- Begin keeping a portfolio containing report cards, test scores, honors, school activities, community activities, and work experience. You may also want to keep samples of your major school projects, papers, etc.
- Know NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements if you want to play sports in college.
- Take courses that are challenging and work to your full potential.
- Be a self-advocate, attend tutorials and do not let yourself fall behind in your classes.
- Get a Social Security Number if you still don't have one.
- Work on improving your study skills.

**Tenth Grade.** *Continue paying attention to your grades. Are they consistent with your ability level?*

- Take the PSAT at Strake in October

- Work to earn the highest possible grades in your classes. Seek to improve your GPA and standing among classmates. Consider enrolling in summer school for one or two courses if you under-perform in a course or courses.
- Register for 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes that provide the most rigorous possible academic challenge that you qualify for and are capable of (maximum of 3 AC and/or AP courses). Consult with your counselor on this matter.
- Attend college fairs offered to Strake sophomores, juniors and their parents.
- Take appropriate AP Tests if applicable.
- Continue adding information to your portfolio.
- Continue reviewing NCAA requirements if you have an interest in intercollegiate athletics
- Use summer time productively. Get a job, participate in a summer enrichment or educational program, travel, participate in volunteer work, and read, read, read! Don't sit at home in front of the TV all summer playing video games.

**Eleventh Grade.** *Remember that this year's grades are the last FULL year that colleges will evaluate, therefore they are the MOST important.*

Fall Semester:

- Plan on joining a club, sport, or participating in a band or dramatic activity. Make sure that you have done something beyond academics while in high school.
- Take the PSAT at Strake in October. Students whose 11<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT Selection Index Scores are in the top 5% nationwide are recognized by the National Merit Foundation. Your scores and analysis will be sent home in December. You will also receive notification regarding your college counselor assignment.
- Attend college fairs and visits
- Continue adding to your portfolio
- Work to maintain good grades
- Explore SAT and ACT Test Prep Programs

Spring Semester:

- Register for the SAT and ACT Plus Writing Tests. College counselors recommend that students take both tests at least once. They also recommend that you not take the SAT before the March test date or the ACT Plus Writing before the April test date.

**SAT Information** ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) Online registration, official practice test, test directions and tips, etc.

**ACT Information** ([www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)) Online registration, practice questions, test directions and tips, etc.

- Meet with your college counselor to discuss your college plans and plan your senior course load.  
REMEMBER: No “easy” senior year.
- Consider visiting colleges over Spring Break and/or summer vacation
- Take AP Tests and SAT II Subject Tests as applicable
- Speak with your college counselor regarding a Pre-Candidate Questionnaire and put yourself in the pipeline if you are interested in a Service Academy appointment
- Begin to consider the following: who you’ll ask to write your letters of recommendation, application essays, scholarships and ways to pay for college

Summer:

- NCAA Clearinghouse Online ([www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net))
- Compose your activities resume.
- Make a preliminary list of at least six potential colleges.
- If you are retaking the SAT and/or ACT in the Fall, review test material using workbooks, websites, sample-problem books, etc.
- Memorize your Social Security Number and your High School Code Number. You’ll use those a lot next year.
- Set up two or three college visits and interviews, an optional but helpful item. Be sure to record the name and phone number of any college representative that you meet.
- Complete rough drafts of essays for prospective colleges. This will save you a great deal of time during your busy senior year.
- Review your school calendar for next year and plan college visits on student holidays.
- Discuss with your parents the financial aspects of senior expenses and college expenses.
- Research scholarship opportunities online.

**Twelfth Grade:** *Senior Year is finally here. Make sure that you maintain good grades and pay close attention to deadlines.*

Fall Semester:

- Make sure you continue to meet high school graduation and college admission requirements.
- Organize and record relevant dates on a calendar so you can plan your year more efficiently.
- Make copies of your admissions and financial aid forms. Practice filling them out before doing the final one.
- Meet with visiting admissions representatives from the schools that interest you.
- Arrange visits to schools you are considering and schedule admissions interviews if required.
- Make the final preparation of your portfolios, audition tapes, writing samples, or other evidence of talent required for admission and/or for scholarships. Finalize your resume to send with your applications.

- Submit your college admissions applications. **Watch out for deadlines.**
- Talk with your parents about what type budget you'll be on your freshman year.
- Take or retake the ACT or SAT.
- **Keep records of everything you submit.**
- Follow up on the progress of your letters of recommendation.
- **If seeking athletic scholarships, contact the coaches from the schools you are considering and include a resume of your accomplishments.**

Spring Semester:

- Apply for financial aid by completing and submitting your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after January 1 as possible. The FAFSA is available from your guidance counselor, from your college's financial aid office, or online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).
- Call the school of your choice and confirm that they have received your admissions applications materials, including letters of recommendation and housing applications.
- Request that your high school send a copy of your transcript to the school where you have applied. Make sure your first semester senior year grades are included on the transcript.
- The information you receive back after the FAFSA is processed is the Student Aid Report (SAR). If any portion of the information on the SAR is incorrect, please correct it and resubmit it to the processing center.
- Submit any additional financial aid forms and documentation that is required by the school of your choice. Some of these forms may be available online, including the FAFSA and some admission applications.
- Notify the school(s) in writing by the proper deadline as to whether you are accepting or declining admission .
- Review your financial aid award letter with your parents and be sure that you understand the terms and conditions that accompany each kind of aid. Sign your financial aid award letter and return it to the school.
- Notify the financial aid office of any outside scholarships or grants that you have accepted since your initial application.
- Be aware of due dates for tuition, fees, room and board, and other expenses. Find out how your financial aid will be disbursed and whether you can defer payments until the funds are available.
- Respond immediately to all correspondence regarding school, scholarships, and financial aid.
- Participate in summer orientation programs for incoming freshman after graduation.  
Meet all class registration deadlines.

## XVII. SAMPLE LETTERS

**Request for Information** You can begin the college planning process by writing for information. This sample letter includes requests for: General Information, Application Forms, A Campus Visit

Date

Office of Admissions

Name of College

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a student at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory and will graduate in (Month), \_\_\_\_\_. Please send me an application for admissions and information about your college -- a general information bulletin, college costs, and program descriptions. I am considering \_\_\_\_\_ as my major field of study.

My parents and I also want to investigate all possible sources of financial aid. Please send us an application form, instructions about application procedures (how and when to apply), and any other information that might be helpful.

I am interested in visiting your campus, taking a campus tour, and meeting with an Admissions Counselor. I would also like to meet with an advisor in the \_\_\_\_\_ department, if possible. Please advise me of a time on (month/date) that would be convenient. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,  
(Your Signature)

Name  
Address  
Social Security Number

**Withdrawing Application** Sometimes, circumstances intervene which make it necessary for a student to withdraw his application even before he has received a decision from a college. Again, it is polite to inform the college of this situation.

Date  
Office of Admissions  
Name of College  
Address of College  
City, State, Zip Code

To Whom It May Concern:

My application for admission to (Name of College/University) has been filed with you. Since my plans for higher education have changed, I should like to withdraw my application for admission at this time. Please accept my thanks for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely yours,  
(Your Signature)

Name

Social Security Number

**Informing College of Decision Not to Enroll**

Date

Office of Admissions

Name of College

Address of College

City, State, Zip Code

To Whom It May Concern:

I have received notification of your acceptance of me at (Name of college/university). However, since I applied for admission some months ago, I have changed my plans. Therefore, I think it only right that I should inform you of this now in order that another applicant may be chosen in my place. Thank you for the consideration and confidence that you have shown in me. I shall continue to think highly of (Name of college/university).

Sincerely yours,

(Your Signature)

Name

Social Security Number

**Letter of Inquiry for Student-Athletes:**

Date

Name of College

Address of College

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Coach \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a (*Junior/Senior*) at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory in Houston, Texas. I have been playing (*Sport*) for \_\_\_\_\_ years and have been a member of the varsity squad at Strake Jesuit for \_\_\_\_\_ years. I play (*position*). I have begun researching colleges and their programs and your school and program are of interest to me.

I am (*height*) and (*weight*). This year I (*scored, ran, etc.*) and was named (*honors, awards, state teams, etc.*). Our record was \_\_\_\_\_. We play in (*provide brief description of competition*). I also play (*summer, club, etc.*). Strake Jesuit

is a College Preparatory High School. My current GPA is \_\_\_\_\_ and my highest SAT Score is \_\_\_\_\_ and my highest ACT Score is \_\_\_\_\_.

I believe that I can contribute to your program. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me or my coach. \_\_\_\_\_ is my coach here at Strake Jesuit and can be reached at (*phone number/email*). My (*club, summer, etc*) coach is \_\_\_\_\_ and can be reached at (*phone number/email*). I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,  
(*Your Signature*)

Full Name  
Address and Phone Number

## XIX. ONLINE RESOURCES

### Application:

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) National Common Application

[www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org) Texas Common Application

### Athletics:

[www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) NCAA Clearinghouse

### Financial Aid:

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) CSS Profile

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) FINAID

[www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com) Sallie Mae

[www.ed.gov/finaid/landing/jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/finaid/landing/jhtml) US Department of Education- Student Financial Assistance

**General College:**

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) College Board

[www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com) College Net

[www.ctconline.com](http://www.ctconline.com) Colleges That Change Lives

[www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com) College View

[www.fiskeguide.com](http://www.fiskeguide.com) Fiske Guide

[www.kaplan.com](http://www.kaplan.com) Kaplan

[www.mycollegeguide.org](http://www.mycollegeguide.org) My College Guide

[www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org) National Association of College Admissions Counselors

[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) Peterson's Guide

[www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com) Princeton Review

**Scholarship:**

[www.brokescholar.com](http://www.brokescholar.com) Broke Scholar

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) Fastweb

[www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com) Scholarships