

*A QUESTION/ANSWER GUIDE  
TO SEARCHING FOR  
&  
APPLYING TO THE COLLEGE  
YOU WANT TO ATTEND*

*With the Help of Naviance*

*ST. VINCENT PALLOTTI HIGH SCHOOL*

*COLLEGE COUNSELING*

**Pallotti SAT/ACT code: 210695**

**Courtesy of Mr. Mark Hanchett**

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# COLLEGE SEARCH & APPLICATION CALENDAR

## JUNIOR YEAR

### March-May

- Prepare first draft of your resume
- Take the **March SAT** at Pallotti
- Get instruction in the use of **Student Connection in Naviance**
- Choose challenging courses for your senior year
- Complete 1<sup>st</sup> college search on **Naviance** or other college search program
- Completely explore **About Careers** program on **Naviance**
- Meet with your college counselor to discuss your search
- Attend **Catholic Schools College Fair at Good Counsel HS** when announced
- Visit some colleges during Easter break and ask good questions
- Attend meetings with college representatives at Pallotti and research colleges
- Consider **SAT prep course** at Pallotti in preparation for June SAT (if desired)
- **Finish Junior year very strongly with your best work**

### July - August

- Continue research on colleges of interest and visit them if possible
- Preview online applications (if available) to see what essays you will have to write
- **Have a family discussion about finances and paying for college**

## SENIOR YEAR

### September

- Return to school ready to work hard
- Begin applications: the 1st major deadline is **November 1 for Early Decision applications and the entire University of Maryland, College Park** application.
- Sign up for October or November SAT and be aware whether you need SAT II scores
- Attend visits by college representatives at Pallotti and attend local college fairs
- Meet with your college counselor to discuss your final choices of colleges
- **Request recommendations from teacher and/or counselor.**

### October

- Begin your applications **online**. Aim to have them completed by Thanksgiving break
- Take **SAT I or SAT II** test as needed at Pallotti
- Register with the **NCAA Eligibility Center** as necessary

### November

- Complete your application essays and **request transcripts** be sent to your colleges
- Send off applications
- Take **SAT I or SAT II** test as needed
- **Enjoy Thanksgiving because your work for applying to college is done!**

### December – April

- **January**
- **Fill out FAFSA and/or CSS Profile (as needed) to begin financial aid request process as soon after January 1 as possible.**
- Receive decisions from your colleges
- Review financial aid packages received from schools (if applied for)
- Make decision where to attend

### May

- By May 1, send deposit to the college you choose to attend
- **Finish your senior year strongly and graduate from Pallotti. Congratulations!**

# SEARCHING

## Q. How do I begin my college search?

A. Before you begin, do a rough draft of your activities list/resume using for help the instructions and sample on the pages in this packet (pages 10-11).

## Q. Then what?

A. You've probably already been thinking about college or whatever you would like to do after high school graduation. But here are some pretty big questions to ask yourself to help this process go forward.

### 1. What kind of a person would I like to become?

### 2. What are my interests and/or abilities that I can develop into something that I can do for the foreseeable future?

### 3. In what way can I direct my life so that I will be helpful to my community, my family, and myself?

Talk over these and any other ones that you think fit the situation with your family members and anyone whose advice you respect.

Then you might begin by listing all the colleges you personally know anything about, that is: a family member or relative went there; it's a college you have always been attracted to for some reason; you've heard the college has a great program in something that interests you; it is a college in your home state.

Remember that there are more than 2000 four-year colleges and more than a 1000 other colleges of many types.

## Q. Really? What are some of the categories of colleges?

A. First, there are the **public, state-supported four-year** and **two-year (community)** colleges in your state. Then remember that every other state has both of these types of colleges.

Second, there are **private** colleges.

Public universities are **secular** as are many private colleges, but there are also many **church-affiliated or religious private** colleges. For example, there are nearly 200 **Catholic** colleges in America. Many other colleges are Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, etc.

Some public or private schools are **specialty colleges** where studies are particularly focused on engineering, music, art, technical subjects, etc.

One grouping of colleges are the **HBCU** (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) schools which include such well-known schools as Howard University, Morehouse College, etc.

Another group of colleges is the **Co-op colleges** where students alternate time spent in a conventional classroom with periods of work in their area of learning with cooperating companies; e.g. Drexel University, Northeastern University, etc.

## Q. How do I decide what kind of college I would like to attend?

A. Well, you might begin by thinking very seriously about what you think is the highest or most important purpose why you would attend college?

**Q. I'm not sure I've really thought about that; what are some of those high and important purposes for going to college?**

A. The highest purpose has traditionally been to continue the education begun when you were small, an education that will open your mind, broaden your experience, teach you how to think, teach you what to think (through grappling with people whose ideas and approaches may differ from yours), and so prepare you for your lifelong responsibilities to care for others and make a beneficial contribution to your community. These last two goals speak both to what you do in your "working" and in your leisure time.

**Q. OK, I agree that this is a good overall purpose, but how do I go about actually picking out some particular schools to apply to?**

A. Start with the high purpose. Look for schools that will give you a broad, comprehensive education in a core curriculum, a substantial grouping of courses that are required of all who graduate from your particular college. These core courses will continue and establish your overall education in the subjects that all well-educated persons should know and understand. These courses will generally take up about one-third of the courses you will need to graduate; the other two-thirds will be divided about equally between your major field courses and other courses you elect to take in related fields of interest.

**Q. Sounds OK, I guess, but I am not sure even that I want to go to a liberal arts college, how do I actually come up with the names of schools to consider?**

A. Before we go any further into looking up schools, let me assure you that if you feel somewhat confused and apprehensive about all this, your feelings are quite normal. If you know exactly which college you want to attend, great; go for it! But most of you are more likely to be uncertain about much of this. Don't worry. Finding the college to attend is a process that becomes increasingly educational, and you will know a lot more in just a few months that will help you make a reasonable decision.

OK, let's get started; let's get practical! Aside from those names of colleges that you come up with on your own, there are useful search engines to separate out suggested schools that fit criteria you develop by answering the search engine's questions, questions such as what size? What cost? Public or private? Religious or secular? Subjects you want to study? Etc.

**Go on the family connection of NAVIANCE, (<http://connection.naviance.com/pallottihs>), and let's start by clicking on the "careers" tab. Then go to the **career interest profiler**. It has 180 questions and can be done in about 15 minutes. **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.** When you finish, you will receive a personal profile of interests using the Holland Code, and then you can see a **matching occupation list** based on your profile. Then go to "personality type" and answer the questions posed there; this takes about 20 minutes. Then look over the results of this assessment.**

**CAUTION:** such interest surveys are meant to advise you, NOT tell you the gospel truth about yourself. The results may strike you anywhere from surprisingly accurate to wildly off the mark.

**Prayer, your own sober estimate of your abilities, your personal experiences, and what others thoughtfully tell you about your skills - all** are very important to any decision you make about your chosen career.

Here is what you will find in “**explore careers & clusters:**” you can search by keyword. Say that you want to find out about being a mechanical engineer; type “**mechanical engineer**” in and click “Go.” A list of engineering jobs opens. Click on “mechanical engineer” and you’ll get the descriptive **overview** tab of the job, an “**interests**” type, **related occupations**, and **college majors** related to that job from which you can click on a list of colleges (**find colleges**) that offer those majors.

Then click on the **Knowledge and Skills** tab at the top of the page and you will find a list of the **5 most important skills** related to the field, the **5 most important abilities**, and the **5 most important knowledge areas**.

Then move on to the **Tasks and Activities** tab to find a list of the typical tasks one does in this work area. This is followed by a list of the most common work activities in the job.

Finally, click on the **Wages** tab to find the wages paid in this field **by state** and also **by hourly wage**.

And occasionally you can watch a **video** that provides further information.

Or, instead of typing in a keyword, you can browse careers by using the **alphabet** or the drop-down list of **categories**. These choices will lead you to the same basic information described above.

Now might be a good time to find out what is meant next by “**Search by Holland Code;**” click on “**what is this?**” to find out. Read the description of **Holland’s Theory of Career Choice**.

### **Q. Well, that took some time; what’s next?**

A. Go to the “About Me” tab on the top of the page and click on “profile” and check to make sure the information there is accurate

### **Q. OK, I’ve done that; where to next?**

A. Now click on “game plan” and fill this in **if you like**. If you have already done your activities list/resume, you may skip this whole item. If you want to continue, give as many answers as you can. Don’t force your answers. If you have no real response, click on “it doesn’t matter.”

### **Q. OK, next?**

A. Now go to “test scores.” There already should be scores for you in there if you have taken the SAT or the ACT. If there are not, or they are incomplete, or they are simply wrong, see Mrs. Marton or Mr. Hanchett to get them corrected; you can’t change these scores yourself.

### **Q. The scores are correct; what’s next?**

A. Now go to the “colleges” tab, click on “college search” and start investigating! You’ll have to answer a bunch of preference questions for this; again, if you don’t have a preference, don’t make up one. After you have answered all the questions, see what colleges come up after pushing the final “Show Matches.”

**Q. Great, now I've got about 37 colleges, how do I sort out which ones to look at? I can't spend all my time doing this!**

A. No, of course not; but do remember that you, probably along with your parents, are making one of the more important decisions of your life, a decision that also will probably cost a considerable amount of money (\$40,000-\$200,000 over four years). Such a decision requires asking lots of people for advice, thinking a lot about the meaning of the decision, and doing a significant amount of research.

Here's where what you put in your profile is very helpful. Begin by putting some of the schools in your "matches" list into your "Hand-picked list," then click on "Compare" and see how you compare to students from Pallotti who have applied to those schools. For those schools where you see **red** numbers, you will know that your numbers are below those of students accepted to the particular college; where you see **green** numbers, you will know you have scored higher than those accepted. These facts will help you to make a reasoned decision about applying to a particular school. Where there are no numbers, you will have to consult other sources of information (college websites, your counselor, college guidebooks) to see how your numbers compare with the middle 50% of students who are accepted at that particular school. From this comparison, pick the ones you want to add to your list of colleges and click on "add to my list." Then go to "colleges I'm thinking about," and click on the several blue lettered clicking spots to see what information comes up.

**Q. What happens if I click on "college match?" Can I get some help from here?**

A. Yes, this is very helpful in suggesting colleges that might match up well with you. The Naviance program has used the current information about you (gpa and SAT scores) and compared it with previous Pallotti students and their college acceptances. From that comparison, a list of colleges has been prepared for you that might be good choices for you to consider, colleges that you are likely to be accepted at. Remember, the list is offered as an aid, as a guide; you may ignore it if you choose, and you are not **guaranteed** acceptance at any particular college based on this.

**Q. OK, what's the next thing "college compare" good for?**

A. Well, this enables you to create a list of any colleges, click on a button, and compare your scores with the average acceptances for those schools from Pallotti students who have applied there.

**Q. The next thing is "scattergrams;" what's that?**

A. These are very helpful in deciding what your chances of being accepted at a particular college might be. Choose a college from the dropdown list of colleges Pallotti students have applied to, click on it, then click on "Display graph." This will give you a graph showing the different decisions made for students with particular SAT scores and GPAs. **The large red circle will show where you would be located on this graph.**

**Q. What's "acceptance history?"**

A. It is simply a list of how many Pallotti students have applied and been accepted at a particular college over the past indicated years.

**Q. What's to be found under "from your school?"**

A. Probably the most helpful thing for you as you start out is “resources.” Click on this and you will find access to many websites that will provide information you might need along the way to your college selection.

**Q. OK, now I have this list of colleges, and I want to know which ones I can get into; how do I know?**

A. This is tough to answer easily, but here are several things to keep in mind. First, find out the middle 50% SAT scores (Critical Reading score + Math score) of those accepted at a particular college. The mid 50% means that 25% of the accepted students have SAT scores below these numbers and 25% have scores above these numbers. Generally, you may assume that you are a **candidate for acceptance if your scores fit in the middle 50%**. If your scores are **above the mid 50% you are a likely candidate** for acceptance; if your scores fall **below the mid 50% you are an unlikely candidate**. This, of course depends on whether your GPA approximately “fits” your SAT scores. A large discrepancy between SAT scores and GPA complicates the prediction. However, it is important to remember that your GPA is the single most important factor in the process of your being evaluated for college acceptance.

**Though no school will admit to a hard and fast formula, it is useful to think of your course selection and GPA counting for 50% of the decision, your SAT (or ACT) scores counting for 25%, and any other factors (extracurriculars, community service, sports, recommendations) counting for 25%.**

**BOTTOM LINE: despite what many people wish to be true, your SAT scores are increasingly important the more competitive the college is that you apply to (competitiveness equals the average SAT scores at the particular college plus the percentage of applicants who are accepted there.)**

**Q. How many colleges should I have on my list and what do I do with my list?**

A. It is best to make a list of 6-9 schools that interest you and are divided this way: three schools are **Fit** schools, schools where your SAT scores (CR + M) are **in the range of the middle 50%** of those accepted at the individual college. Then look at three **Stretch** schools, schools you’d love to go to but your SAT scores are **below the middle 50%**. Finally, find three **Safety** schools, schools at which your SAT scores are **above the middle 50%** of those schools’ scores.

**Q. Now I can guess what to do next; go to these schools’ websites, come to the College Counseling Offices, and look anywhere else that I can to find information on these schools, right?**

A. Right; here’s where the digging begins. You need to learn whether the school seems to actually fit what you are looking for in a school and whether you fit what that school seems to want in a student. This will take considerable work, so get at it as soon as possible.

And now is the best time to point out that some schools are going to disappear from your list, and others will be added, based on what you learn, based on what others tell you about their searches, etc. Remember, you can go back and do new searches on your Naviance account at any time.

This part of the process will take you the remainder of the spring, the summer, and a part of the fall of your senior year. It will also lead you to think about college visits. You can begin college visits this Easter vacation or do them during the summer or in the fall.

Our counseling office can help you with materials for colleges. We have, in a rack outside Mrs. Marton's office, the marketing materials of many colleges for you to look at. Please do not take these from the office area. We also have the college catalogues of many colleges in Mrs. Duckworth's office and a computer to use to explore college websites.

**Q. Are there any ways I can improve my prospects for college acceptance even toward the end of my junior year?**

A. Yes. **First**, and most important, finish your year and carry into your senior year a strong desire to do your very best academically. **Second**, be sure that you have chosen the most challenging courses you may take for your senior year schedule. **Third**, consider whether taking an SAT prep course might help you show your best work on these important tests. **Fourth**, work hard at a responsible job this summer, or, if you can afford it, look into many of the college-preparatory course options available this summer at colleges around the country.

**Q. OK, this is helpful. What else can I do to get this college search process going?**

A. Well, be sure you use the opportunities you have to speak with your counselor, Mr. Hanchett or Mrs. Marton. Also talk to your teachers to ask them about their experience going through the college search process – all will be happy to talk with you.

Keep track of when SATs or ACTs will be given in the fall to be sure that you are properly signed up in time.

Finally, think very carefully about which teacher you would like to ask to write a “teacher” recommendation letter for you. You will ask only **one teacher**, except in a few cases when you might have to ask a second teacher. Your assigned counselor, Mrs. Marton or Mr. Hanchett will write a “counselor letter” for you (or you may ask Mrs. Duckworth). You will need to be prepared to ask for these letters early in the fall – September - as you prepare your applications.

**Q. Here's another question: I have been involved in varsity sports at Pallotti and would like to play possibly at an NCAA Division I or Division II school. I hear that I must go through the NCAA Eligibility Center; what's the deal with that?**

A. Let's start with Division III which you didn't ask about. For DIII there are no external (outside the college you attend) requirements. For DI and DII there are. First, you need to go the NCAA website ([www.web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common](http://www.web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common)) and roam around the site, become familiar with it. In summary remember these things: you must **be familiar with recruiting rules** so that you and the coach you may be talking to do not violate the rules. If you want to play in DII, you must have a GPA of 2.0 or better and a combined verbal (CR) and math (M) SAT score of 820 or an ACT sum score (all subscores added together) of 68. To play DI you must look at the sliding scale the NCAA has for your SAT or ACT scores alongside your GPA to see if you qualify. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to these regulations.

## CREATING AN ACTIVITIES LIST (RESUME)

A good Activities List helps you attract the attention you deserve. Here are some tips.

1. Be sure to include at the top of the page your name, address and any other personal identification you wish to share, e.g. phone number, email address.
2. Work backward chronologically from your present grade to your freshman year. Only include activities before high school if they are a part of a lengthy history, e.g. “Ten years of flute playing,” “Six years of lacrosse,” etc.
3. Lead from your strength. Mention first the activity that is most important to you, e.g. “Community service.”
4. Format the document to showcase your involvements in the best light. If your activities are long-term and few in number, list them by category. If, on the other hand, you have many short-term activities, you might list them by year.
5. Keep this list on your computer so that you can use parts of it for your applications, and so you can update it at any time.
6. Consider adding your list to your application if the application does not provide adequate opportunity to list your activities.
7. To do this list correctly, you need to do some “bragging.” Ask your parents, your relatives, your friends to help you come up with things you might appropriately brag about. Don’t exaggerate, but don’t hold back.
8. Some categories to consider:
  - A. Community service
  - B. Athletics
  - C. Music/Art
  - D. Leadership
  - E. Clubs
  - F. Academic awards
  - G. Summer experiences
  - H. Hobbies
  - I. Travel
  - J. Work/Jobs – list last

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**SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**  
**LIST**

Objective: To complete secondary school with academic, extracurricular and athletic success and be admitted to a challenging college that will further prepare me to use my gifts for other people.

**Education**

St. Vincent Pallotti High School – Laurel, MD 2007-2011  
College preparatory curriculum including AP and Honors courses  
GPA: 3.52 overall; 3.62 in 11<sup>th</sup> grade  
Woodstock School – Berlin, Germany 2000-2006  
My family lived in Germany these years while my father  
was stationed there with the U.S. Army.

**Academic Honors**

Elected to the National Honor Society - 11<sup>th</sup> grade

**Extracurricular Activities**

Class President 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>  
Yearbook: sports editor – 12<sup>th</sup>  
Choir: 10th-12<sup>th</sup>  
Fellowship of Christian Athletes: 10th-12th

**Athletics**

Soccer: 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; varsity 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>  
Basketball: 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; varsity 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; All League-12<sup>th</sup>

**Community Service**

Habitat for Humanity – projects in Laurel, Annapolis, and Odenton  
I worked approximately 40 hours each year on these in 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>  
Christmas in April – aid to needy families in Prince Georges County  
Worked one Saturday each year of high school  
Participated in gathering clothes for annual clothing drive at St. Paul's  
Church organized by the church youth group

**Hobbies**

Knitting  
Extreme Skateboarding

**Work Experience**

For the past two summers, I have been a paid counselor in the Laurel Boys  
and Girls Club day camp

## BOOKS USEFUL IN THE COLLEGE SEARCH & APPLICATION PROCESS

There are, of course, many other books that might be very helpful in the process; however these are the ones we use most here at Pallotti. The prices given are mostly from amazon.com in January 2010. You should always ask for the most recent edition. Most of these books can be bought at Barnes & Noble or Borders bookstores.

*The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*, The Cardinal Newman Society. Available at [www.thenewmanguide.com](http://www.thenewmanguide.com). (\$19.95)

*The Official Catholic College & University Guidebook*. The National Catholic College Admission Association. Available at [www.catholiccollegesonline.org](http://www.catholiccollegesonline.org) (\$24.95)

*Choosing the Right College (The Whole Truth about America's Top Schools)*, ISI Books. Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Available at [www.isibooks.org](http://www.isibooks.org) (\$22.40)

*All American Colleges (Top Schools for Conservatives, Old-Fashioned Liberals, and People of Faith)*, ISI Books. Available at [www.isibooks.org](http://www.isibooks.org) (\$17.60)

*College Handbook*. College Board. Available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) at most chain bookstores. (\$20.00)

*Book of Majors*. College Board. Available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (\$18.00)

*Guide to Getting Financial Aid*. College Board. Available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (\$15.00)

*The Public Ivies (America's Flagship Public Universities)*. Howard Greene & Matthew Green, eds. Available at [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com) (\$6.00)

*Colleges That Change Lives (40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think about Colleges)*. Loren Pope. Penguin Books. Available at most chain bookstores. (\$11.00)

*Thomson Peterson's Four-Year Colleges*. Available at most chain bookstores. (\$21.75)

*The Best 366 Colleges*. Princeton Review. Available at [www.PrincetonReview.com](http://www.PrincetonReview.com) (\$21.95)

*The K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities*. Marybeth Kravets and Amy Wax; The Princeton Review. Available at [www.PrincetonReview.com](http://www.PrincetonReview.com) (\$20.00)

*America's Best Colleges for B Students. A College Guide for Students without Straight A's*. Tamara B. Orr. Available at [www.supercollege.com](http://www.supercollege.com) (\$14.96)

*Creative Colleges: A Guide for Student Actors, Artists, Dancers, Musicians and Writers*. Elaina Loveland. Available at [www.supercollege.com](http://www.supercollege.com) (\$14.96)

*Fiske Guide to Colleges*. Edward B. Fiske. Available at most chain bookstores. (\$16.00)

## MARYLAND PUBLIC & PRIVATE 4-YEAR COLLEGES

College	Mid 50% CR+M			SVP gpa/cr+m	Cost 08- 09
				<b>2004-09</b>	
University of Maryland UC	open	pu		NA	#\$6K
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore	730-910	pu		2.23/828	\$14.5K
Columbia Union College	770-980	pv		NA	\$27K
Coppin State College	780-930	pu		2.2/760	\$13.5K
Morgan State University	800-990	pu		2.54/850	\$15.5K
Frostburg State University	860-1070	pu		2.94/976	\$14.5K
College of Notre Dame of Maryland(W)	910-1120	pv	ca	3.11/880	\$36K
Stevenson University	920-1130	pv		3.19/1010	\$31K
University of Baltimore	940-1140	pu		3.59/1090	#\$8K
Hood College	950-1180	pv		3.18/1013	\$37K
Mount St. Mary's University	960-1170	pv	ca	3.43/1058	\$31K
Towson University	970-1160	pu		3.43/1049	\$16.5K
Bowie State University	980-1160	pu		2.78/917	\$15K
McDaniel College	1010-1230	pv		3.39/1039	\$38K
Goucher College	1030-1260	pv		3.64/1103	\$45K
Salisbury University	1040-1210	pu		3.29/1021	\$15.5K
Washington College	1040-1240	pv		3.35/1120	\$42.5K
MD Institute College of Art	1040-1280	pv		2.85/840	\$43.5K
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	1080-1300	pu		3.54/1107	\$18K
Loyola College in Maryland	1100-1280	pv	ca	3.88/1216	\$47K
St. Mary's College of Maryland	1150-1340	pu		3.76/1213	\$23K
United States Naval Academy	*1160- 1350	pu		4.12/1315	\$0
University of Maryland	1170-1380	pu		3.65/1136	\$18K
St. John's College	*1230- 1440	pv		3.61/1260	\$50K
Johns Hopkins University	1290-1500	pv		4.23/1353	\$51K
*see counselor (special cases)					
pu=public: pv=private: ca=catholic					
#room,board not included				1/19/2010	

## **Campus Visit Checklist** (Courtesy of SallieMae CollegeAnswer.com)

Visits to schools beat pictures in brochures any day! If you have the opportunity, you should experience college life first-hand during your junior and senior years to be sure your home away from home will be the right one for you. Carefully plan each visit...and limit the number of visits to the schools that are most important to you.

### **Planning the Visit**

- Get a map of the campus.
- Plan at least a full day (and stay overnight, if possible) at each school.
- Visit when school is in session.
- Arrange an interview with an admissions officer or sign up for a group session, if available.
- Prepare a list of questions you might have about the school.
- Get a notebook to record the answers and your impressions.

### **What to Do**

- Take a campus tour.
- Talk with students and faculty.
- Attend a sporting event, if possible.

### **What to Look For**

- Watch how students spend their time: studying, partying, socializing, exercising.
- Check out the size of the average dorm room and what the normal furniture is.
- Look at what students have in their rooms and how they've arranged it (e.g., computers, TVs).
- What's available off campus? Restaurants, theaters, museums, public libraries, job opportunities?

### **What to Ask**

- Are there active fraternities and sororities on campus?
- How good is the food in the dining facilities?
- Can you stay in the dorm for more than freshman year? Can you have a single room or must you share? And if you're sharing, with how many others?
- What intercollegiate and intramural teams are represented on campus?
- What kinds of clubs and societies are represented on campus?
- How well are the campus and its facilities maintained?
- How safe is the campus? Where are the campus police located? Are there safety programs, such as escorts and emergency phone boxes, on campus?

## How to make the most of a college interview (courtesy College Counseling Sourcebook)

- The interview is primarily for you to learn about the college and to allow the interviewer to learn about you. The interview can have a positive effect on your admission.
- When you schedule an interview, check to see if it is evaluative (used as a factor in admissions decisions) or informational (used in helping an applicant to learn more about the college). Knowing the purpose will help you prepare for the interview. In most cases, even if the interview is evaluative, it is not one of the most important criteria used by the college. Relax and be yourself!
- Your interview will usually be with an admissions staff member, but it may be with a student, alumnus, or a professional interviewer. Keep this person's perspective in mind. Don't write off the college just because you think you had a bad interview. Interviewers have bad days, too.
- The interviewer is eager to get to know you and is almost always on your side. An experienced person knows that you may be new at interviewing and will try to put you at ease. The interviewer will answer your questions but will be more interested if you have helpful questions that show you've done some research on the college already.
- An important part of preparation is self-assessment. In what kind of environment do you work best? Would you take advantage of class discussions or would you rather learn by the lecture method? Know your rank, your test scores, your present areas of interest. If you are undecided about your career, feel free to say so (half of college students change their intended major). You should, however, recognize that you are going to college primarily to learn. Think through some areas you would like to explore, competencies you would like to develop, projects or situations that intrigue you.
- Do your homework about the school to get the obvious questions answered. You don't want to be silent when asked, "What would you like to know about our college?" Questions or comments like, "What if I can't decide between two majors?" "What kinds of internships are there, and how often do students take them?" or "I've liked art, but don't wish to major in it" show more maturity in your thinking than asking how many books are in the college library.
- Interviewers may ask questions about your interests, extracurricular activities/jobs, books you've read, meaningful experiences, reasons for applying to this college, life at school, and similar topics. Be ready to talk about these subjects.
- Be honest. Everyone has strong and weak points. College will help you with some of the latter and promote the former.
- Plan to have your interview alone. Most admissions officers prefer to speak with your parents after talking with you, rather than during the interview.
- Dress neatly and comfortably.
- When you return home, **write a thank-you note** to the person who interviewed you.

## Questions to ask college representative (courtesy College Counseling Sourcebook)

College reps, as well as college students, admissions counselors, and faculty, genuinely enjoy talking to high school students. They like to share their ideas about their college, and they all appreciate students who have thought about the college and want to know more than is in the course catalog, in the viewbook, or on the Web site. They like thoughtful questions, and their answers can help you make a good college match. Ask questions of interest to you in the following categories.

### **Students**

- How would you characterize the majority of students?
- From what economic background are the majority of students?
- Are there clubs, activities, or housing that are minority related?
- What do students like most about the college? Like least?
- Has the student government made any real contribution to the school? How did the administration react? What was the resolution?

### **Social life and campus activities**

- What do students do for fun?
- What is the role of fraternities and sororities on campus? If I didn't want to join, could I have a satisfactory social life?
- What are the dominant social groups on campus? Do the groups get along with one another? Have there been any problems?
- What role do team sports play in the social life of the college? What happens on football or basketball weekends? If I didn't want to join in, would I find kindred spirits?
- Is there a good balance of academics, social life, and extracurricular activities?
- What were the social or cultural highlights last year?
- What is the role of the campus newspaper?
- Is there an alcohol problem and, if so, how is the college handling it? What is the incidence of binge drinking? Do students feel safe on campus?

### **Campus Facilities**

#### *Housing and dining*

- Is there something I should know about housing that would help me in my choice?
- What are the types of food plans? All you can eat? Vegetarian? Kosher?

#### *Activity centers and athletic and recreational facilities*

- What kinds of facilities does the student center have? Is it a magnet for student activities? Are there other hangouts?
- Do you think the college pays attention to its appearance?
- How would you rate the fitness center?

#### *Health, career counseling, special student services, and security*

- Is there a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or career counselor on campus? What is the waiting period for appointments?
- Is the office for special services adequate to the demand?
- How good is the security on campus?

#### *Library*

- What have been students' experiences with the library? Have there been complaints?
- Is the library well-equipped with computers and copy machines?

#### **The community off campus**

- What is there to do in town? How would I get there?

#### **Academics and faculty**

- What is distinctive about education here? What is the educational philosophy of the college? Has it changed much in recent years?
- Is the honor code working? How widespread is cheating?
- What is the most popular major on campus? Why?
- Do you think that students are generally enthusiastic about their classes? Do people talk about their courses outside of class?
- How would you characterize the academic pressure and workload?
- Are there research possibilities with the faculty? In what areas?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the advising system?
- What is the quality of student and faculty relationships? Is the faculty interested in and accessible to students after class? Do faculty members participate in student activities?
- Are curriculum changes in the works? How will that affect my college years?
- Are any departments being cut back or discontinued? If so, why?
- Are any new programs scheduled for the next four years?

## **How to get the most out of a college fair: Tips for students**

### **Reasons to attend**

- Gain exposure to a variety of postsecondary institutions throughout the country.
- Ask questions about current admissions and financial aid information
- Pick up free brochures on colleges that you might want to consider
- Receive answers to specific questions
- Learn from experts in special-interest sessions

### **Bring with you**

- A large plastic bag for college brochures
- A pen and notepad

### **Questions to ask the college representatives**

- Do my GPA and test scores make me eligible for admission to your college? Would I get into the major I want?
- How could I explore my interests (academic, major, extracurricular)?
- What percentage of students receives financial aid? What is the average package?
- Is your college “need blind” in the admissions process-do you determine admission without regard to a student’s financial situation?
- Where do most students live? What is the focus of social life?
- What is unique about your campus?

### **After the fair**

- Don’t put the college materials in the back of your closet. Keep them nearby for when you’re ready to review them.
- Look through the materials, and your notes, within the week.
- Keep everything. Weed out colleges that aren’t a good fit.
- Research colleges that interest you Explore web sites, request more information from admissions offices, and plan to visit.

*Source: Adapted from material prepared by the National Association for College Admission by Counseling College Counseling Sourcebook*

# APPLYING

**Q. I took the SATs last spring, I'm signed up for another try at them this fall, and I've found the colleges that I'm interested in. I have divided them into "Fit" schools, "Stretch" schools, and "Safety" schools, now what do I do to apply to them?**

A. Sounds like you're in good shape. Of course, you can keep on searching even while you begin your applications. And you can continue visits and interviews.

**Q. Well, I may search for another school or two, but I'm really eager to get started. Do I get a paper application or do I do apply online?**

A. You can do either, but the colleges are making it very clear they **prefer online applications**. Some colleges will even waive (not charge) the application fee if you do the application online.

It's easy to do. You simply go to the college's website, to their admissions page, find the application, set up an account, and begin working. You can work on the application any time you want, save what you've done, and return to work further when you have time. The application sits in your account until you decide to "send" it to the college.

**CAUTION: FILL OUT THE APPLICATION VERY CAREFULLY!** You must use standard English everywhere; you must proofread, and you should have someone else proofread everything you write. A sloppy application filled with text message language, spelling errors, careless hand-writing (if done on paper), etc. will not make the right impression.

**Q. OK, I'll be careful. What's the best way to keep track of the deadlines for each of the schools I'm applying to, and are deadlines really important?**

A. Yes, deadlines are very important; they should always be met **without fail**. The best way to keep track of deadlines is by using "colleges I'm thinking about" on your **NAVIANCE family connection** account. There you will see each college's deadlines to the right of the college's name on your list.

But you should also understand the types of decisions and their deadlines. The **Regular admission** deadline is what the overwhelming majority of students will meet. This usually comes January 1 or later.

**IMPORTANT EXCEPTION: University of Maryland: College Park.** Your entire application is due **NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>**. If you intend to get into College Park, **this deadline must be observed.**

If you apply for **Early Decision**, the deadline will be earlier, usually in early November. When you apply for Early Decision, you are saying that that particular college is clearly your first choice and that if you are accepted, you will attend there. You will be required to withdraw all your other applications upon notification of your Early Decision acceptance. You should apply for Early Decision only if you are certain you want to attend that one college and if you have academic credentials (GPA and test scores) in the top quarter of those accepted by that college.

If you apply for **Early Action**, you will simply receive a decision from the college earlier than the response to a Regular application, but you will not be required to attend the college that accepts you under this program.

**Q. Thanks for those explanations. Should I expect to have to write an essay or two for my application? If I do, is there any help for me?**

A. Yes, most colleges require you to write one or more essays. (See later page for help in writing the essay(s).) Essays are important, so you need to get busy on them sooner rather than later. If you want help, please see Mr. Hanchett or Mrs. Marton.

**Q. I've heard about some other SATs called the SAT II tests. What are these? Do I need to take them. When are they given?**

A. The SAT II tests are required by most of the highly-competitive colleges. They are tests in particular areas of study that you have already had (e.g. US History, biology, chemistry, etc). **YOU MUST CHECK** to see if they are required by the colleges you are applying to. You may take these tests on most of the same days the regular SAT is given. However, you may NOT take both the SAT and the SAT II on the same day. See Mr. Hanchett or Mrs. Marton for details far ahead of time.

**Q. Won't I be expected to provide an Activities List (Resume)? How do I put that together?**

A. Re-read the earlier accompanying pages *Creating An Activities List (Resume)* and *Sample Activities List*. Experiment with your format until it looks especially good.

**Q. I expect to seek financial aid; will I have to have all my family financial information for the application?**

A. No. You will probably need to indicate by checking a box that you expect to need financial aid, but financial aid is applied for through the US government by using the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) which will become available online and will need to be filled out as soon as possible after January 1.

**Q. OK, I understand that I am responsible for completing the application, writing the essay(s), preparing a resume, and gathering financial aid information. What else do I need to do regarding the application? And what part does the college counseling office have in all this.**

A. There are three additional matters you are responsible for:

(1) you must have your **SAT or ACT scores** sent directly from [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to the colleges to which you are applying.

(2) You must fill out a **Transcript Request Form** thoroughly **for each transcript** you need to have sent to colleges. The request form is available online on the school website or from Mrs. Marton or Mrs. Duckworth. A sample of this form is at the end of this packet. This form should be filled out thoroughly and given to Mrs. Marton at least **three weeks** prior to the application deadline.

**\*\*Important Reminder\*\*** Schools are now requesting records be submitted electronically. In order for the College Counseling Office to submit your school documents electronically you must go to the “Colleges I am applying to” section of your Family Connection Page and complete the section on “Privacy Notice for Common Application Users” Indicate whether or not you waive your right to see your recommendations (Colleges want you to waive the right ) and check the box giving the school permission to submit your records. IF you have used the common application you must enter your common application user name and password so your records can be matched at the school.

(3) You must ask ONE of your teachers to fill out a **recommendation form** and write a **recommending letter**.

**IMPORTANT:** if the college requests a form that you are to print out and give to your teacher and/or counselor, come to the counseling office for the form and take it to your teacher. You may use a general form that our office provides for this purpose.

**Q. Can you give me any advice about whom to ask to write a recommendation for me?**

A. Yes. Think about the teacher of the class in which you have done your best, especially if the subject of the course relates specifically to what you intend to study in college; e.g. your calculus teacher, because you intend to study engineering. Or consider a teacher with whom you’ve done several things. Perhaps you have had him/her as a coach for three years, or choir director, or you have participated with the teacher in school ministries.

**BUT** before you ask anyone to write for you – and you must do this personally, face-to-face, **at least three weeks before the letter is due**. Also you should hand-write on your Activities List the college(s) the recommendation is for and the date the recommendation is due.

When you ask your assigned college counselor to write for you, be sure you ask him or her, and have a resume prepared to give the counselor when you turn in your transcript request form.

**Q. Some of my applications aren’t due until January 10<sup>th</sup>; when should I turn transcript requests into the office?**

A. Immediately after Thanksgiving break. Why? Because the college counseling office is closed down for the two weeks of Christmas break just as the rest of the school is.

**Q. One last question on applications: two of my schools use the Common Application; are there particular instructions for these?**

A. Yes. Go to [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) and follow all the instructions. If you get stalled, ask questions.

**Q. OK, now I’ve got to ask about financial aid. I looked at one college that is going to cost over \$50,000 a year, and lots of other good ones cost \$40K-\$50K; should I just forget about these and go to the state university?**

A. Well, going to the state university has some real advantages, not the least of which is cost. However, don’t give up on the possibility of a great private college education- these colleges also have real advantages – just because of “sticker shock.” Do you know that average costs at Harvard last year

for students who needed financial aid were \$15,600? This is at a school whose regular tuition, room, and board costs are about \$50,000.

Here is our general advice: **apply to the colleges you really want to attend, apply for financial aid, then see what happens.**

**Q. I guess applying for financial aid is a separate process. What are the basics I need to know?**

A. You begin by indicating on your application (if asked) that you will be applying for financial aid. Then go on the website [www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov](http://www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov) to apply for a PIN; your parent(s) will also need to get a PIN. **Do this before Christmas break of your senior year.**

**Prior to January 1, at any time**, you and/or your parents can go to [www.fafs4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafs4caster.ed.gov) to do a trial run to see how much financial aid you might anticipate. This can be very helpful, so you are strongly encouraged to do this long before January 1 arrives.

**Right after January 1**, go online **with your parents** to fill out the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) with **estimated** numbers that your parents will use for their income tax return. When this application is processed by the government, the information will be sent to the colleges you choose to aid them in preparing a “financial aid package” for you. When that arrives following your acceptance, you will have to decide whether it fits your family’s financial situation.

**Some colleges** will also require that you fill out a **CSS/Financial Aid Profile**. This, too, can be done online. It provides more specific family financial information to aid colleges that require it. Information on this can be found at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

**Q. I know that I am supposed to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center if I want to play Division I or II sports in college; I forgot how to do that.**

A. Go to the internet and type in the search line **NCAA Eligibility Center**; when the site comes up, read and follow the instructions carefully. Otherwise, consult *A Guidebook for the College-Bound Panther Athlete* that was made available last spring or can be picked up from the college counseling office. And see the *Checklist for Student Athletes* included in this guide.

**Q. My last question for now. To be sure that I have all my bases covered, I need to know the process for applying to the community college. How do I find out?**

A. Well, don’t forget that you can always contact the community college admissions office or go online to the college’s site and see what you discover under “Admissions.” But basically, here is the procedure: by about February 15, you should go online and apply to your community college. The process is relatively simple, but you should be proactive and not delay. You should also be aware that there are some significant scholarships available to well-qualified students regardless of need. The sooner you contact the college, the better you will be prepared to see if you can take advantage of these significant opportunities.

**Q. This is a lot to think about and do; I’ll probably have many other questions.**

A. Good. Be sure to come and ask them; we’ll do our best to help.

## Help for Writing the Personal Essay for College

The personal essay often required for college applications is an important yet often intimidating part of the application. Consider carefully the following advice BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER you write your essay.

### General Advice

1. Tell a story only you can tell. Write about an experience that really interests you.
2. Begin with a small experience and allow the “real you” to emerge from its development.
3. Allow your reader to share the experience.
4. Use concrete detail, not generalities to tell your story.
5. Show enthusiasm and passion. Be lively and sincere but not frivolous.
6. Make clear how you have grown and matured through the experience.
7. Talk to someone you trust, off whom you can bounce ideas and who will respond honestly to what you want to write.
8. Start early to write so that you can set the essay aside for a few days before coming back to rethink and revise it.

### Mechanical Advice

1. Do not be wordy or flowery; do not use difficult words just to impress.
2. Forget these words: “very,” “really,” “interesting;” use “I” as infrequently as possible.
3. Write in the active voice not the passive: “My brother John found the dripping dog” NOT “The dripping dog was found by my brother John.”
4. Do not use exclamation points!
5. Eliminate unnecessary adverbs and adjectives; keep only those necessary for clarity.
6. Avoid or use carefully the words “however,” “therefore,” “in conclusion.”
7. Do not use contractions unless you are quoting (as in dialogue).
8. Stick to your subject; do not wander.
9. Use weighty and serious quotations very sparingly; avoid quoting a popular song.
10. Do not repeat information from other parts of your application unless absolutely necessary.
11. Do not rely on spellcheque (!) to pick up all errors.

### Avoid these topics and similar ones

1. Your vacation in Europe.
2. Your girlfriend or boyfriend.
3. Your religion (unless applying to a religious college).
4. Your political beliefs.
5. The death of someone close to you unless you are sure you can handle it properly.
6. Your personal philosophy of life.
7. How great you are and how successful you’ve been.
8. The importance of a college education unless you can handle this topic objectively.
9. Any topic that might embarrass the reader.
10. How you wish to attend college so that you can later earn lots of money.

Take your topic, make it your own, and show that you are a mature and interesting person whom any college would enjoy having as part of its community. AND don’t hesitate to talk with a teacher or your counselor if you want help on your essay(s), **but be absolutely sure the essay is your own.**

## THE COMPLETED COLLEGE APPLICATION PACKAGE

- I. The responsibility of the student and his/her family:
  - A. Compose resume (activities list)
  - B. Complete the application and prepare fees
  - C. Write required essay(s)
  - D. Give a Transcript Request form for each school to your College Counselor
  - E. Have SAT/ACT scores sent directly (when requested) to the colleges from the respective testing services.
  - F. Gather family income information for seeking financial aid (after January 1)
  
- II. The responsibility of the student with the help of the school:
  - A. Letter(s) of recommendation: must be requested of the appropriate person(s) several weeks before deadlines.
  - B. Any other forms or additional papers that the student wants the counseling office to send on his/her behalf: these must be included when the transcript form is turned in.
  
- III. The responsibility of the Pallotti college counseling office after the Transcript Request form has been turned in to Mrs. Marton (no later than three weeks before the application deadline). We strongly urge that all college application materials be into our office **BEFORE Thanksgiving break.**
  - A. Prepare the student's transcript
  - B. Prepare the current **Pallotti profile**
  - C. Complete the counselor's secondary school report form which the counseling office has for each student
  - D. Send Pallotti Profile, student transcript, secondary school report form, counselor recommendation, teacher recommendation and teacher form (if required) to each college for which a request has been made.
  - E. At the end of the first semester of the senior year, automatically send an updated (1<sup>st</sup> semester grades added) transcript to each college to which the student has applied

## CHECKLIST FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

1. Decide on what level (NCAA Division I, II, III) you can compete in college. Ask your high school coach for an evaluation of your ability. Be honest with yourself.
2. Remember all NCAA Division I and II players must be registered through the NCAA Clearinghouse. You may use the web site at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) or use a link from the NCAA's web site at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).
3. You do not have to go through the NCAA Clearinghouse to compete in Division III.
4. Be sure that you are familiar with the NCAA recruiting rules. They vary according to sport and your year in high school. It is **your responsibility** to know these rules.
5. Write or, if appropriate, email coaches. Personalize each letter. Form letters are not as likely to impress coaches.
6. Return any questionnaire a coach sends you as soon as possible. Delay suggests lack of interest on your part.
7. Make a sports videotape. Many colleges will request a video showing your athletic skill; however, don't send it before the college asks.
8. Send your high school schedule to the coaches. If you have a game in their area, be sure to highlight that game. Include an email address and/or telephone number as well as contact information for your coach so he/she can confirm information regarding you.
9. Follow up any coach's response in a timely way with a phone call or an email.
10. **Be clear regarding the details of the level of your courses (regular, honors, AP), your high school grades, your approximate class rank, and your SAT or ACT scores.**

**ST. VINCENT PALLOTTI HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE COUNSELING**

**TRANSCRIPT REQUEST FORM**

**Fill out ONE FORM for EACH COLLEGE and give form and all documentation to Mrs. Marton TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE DUE DATE. Please include \$5.00 for each official transcript.**

**Read each item carefully and answer each.**

1. Your Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Application Deadline \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Date you submitted this request \_\_\_\_\_
4. Send transcript to \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_
5. This college's mid 50% SAT scores? \_\_\_\_\_. Stretch? \_\_\_ Fit? \_\_\_ Safety? \_\_\_
6. Application: \_\_\_ Sent online 7. Is this a *Common Application*? \_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_ Early Decision (binding) \_\_\_ Early (Priority) Action \_\_\_ Regular Decision \_\_\_ Rolling Admission

**NOTE: colleges require that SAT or ACT scores BE SENT FROM THE TESTING SERVICES DIRECTLY; Pallotti DOES NOT do this for you.**

**9. Only ONE teacher should be asked for a RECOMMENDATION LETTER. Only if specifically required by the college should you ask for more than one. Copies of the letter are sent to all your colleges.**

Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Your College Counselor, Mrs. Duckworth or Mrs. Marton will write a second letter of recommendation for you. Be sure that you have attached your ACTIVITIES LIST/RESUME to your first transcript request for the counselor's use.**

**IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE: Under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), you must grant permission to your school to send your academic records to the place/person named above, and after you matriculate you *will* have access to all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by you and on your behalf after matriculating, unless one of the following is true:**

**1. The institution does not save recommendations post-matriculation**

**2. You waive your right to access below, regardless of the institution to which it is sent.**

Yes, I do waive my right to access, and I understand I will never see this form or any other recommendations done on my behalf.

No, I do not waive my right to access, and I may someday choose to see any recommendations submitted to the institution at which I'm enrolling, if that institution saves them after I matriculate.

11. Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: your mid-year transcript will be automatically sent to every college to which you apply. You do not need to request this nor pay for it.**

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Cover Letter

Secondary School Report

Profile

School Recommendations

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Grades?

Transcript

Teacher Recommendations

Yes

School Seal

Postcard

No

rev. 3/12