



College Planning Guide

While the college planning process may seem a bit overwhelming, it is also an exciting time to start thinking about your interests and planning for your future. Collier High School's Postgraduate Department is your resource for planning for college and guiding you in the steps along the way. We hope that this guide provides you with the things you need to know about college planning, choosing a school, financing your education, and completing your college applications.

Please get to know your postgraduate counselors! We offer individual planning appointments, interest inventories and help choosing a major, assistance with your college applications, college planning groups and workshops, and much more. Reach out for an appointment or come see us in Annex E!

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College Options: 2-year vs. 4-year schools

Know your college options. Community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities offer different degrees and have different application processes and requirements. What degree you pursue will depend upon your career goals; some jobs will require a Bachelor's Degree while others may require only an Associate's Degree. Keep in mind that there are many career options that do not require college, but may instead require shorter-term training at a vocational/trade school or apprenticeship program.

Community College/ 2-Year School

- Two Year Program
- Leads to Associate's Degree (AA or AS)
- Offers career-oriented programs (AAS)
- No campus housing
- Tuition generally much less expensive
- Acceptance is guaranteed
- Apply through college website- no SAT or ACT required
- Application will not require teacher recommendations or college essay

4-Year College/University

- Four Years to Complete
- Leads to Bachelor's Degree (BA or BS)
- Can live on campus or commute
- Tuition generally much higher than community college
- Acceptance more competitive
- Apply through college website, Common Application, or Coalition- may require SAT/ACT
- Application will likely require teacher recommendations and a college essay

College Applications

Colleges use different formats for the application process. If you are applying to community college, you will apply directly on the college website. For 4-year colleges and universities, application is generally made through the Common Application or the Coalition Application. Most colleges and universities accept the Common Application, but it is important to note that some may not. Both the Common Application and the Coalition Application provide a single platform for your application. The benefit is that you fill out the basic information once, and you can send all your applications through the single platform. Some colleges may require supplemental questions and essays to complete, in addition to the basic information asked on the Common Application.

Application Requirements

Community college applications do not require an essay, teacher recommendations, or standardized test results (SAT or ACT). Application requirements for 4-year schools vary, but most require a counselor recommendation, teacher recommendations, a college essay, and SAT or ACT scores. "Test-optional" schools do not require that you submit SAT or ACT scores, though they may be used for consideration for scholarship money and merit aid.

Common Application

www.commonapp.org

Coalition Application

www.mycoalition.org

Types of Applications/Admissions Plans

Application deadlines vary by school, and it is vital that you know your application deadlines for each college where you plan to apply. If you miss the application deadline by even one day, your application will not be accepted by the college. There are several options that colleges offer in terms of application deadlines.

Early Decision (ED): Early Decision means that you apply to the school earlier than the regular decision deadline; applications for ED are usually in early November or December. ED is a binding decision meaning that, if accepted, the student agrees to rescind all other college applications. The admissions decision usually does not include any financial aid information- students may be accepting an offer without knowing what the school will be offering them in terms of financial aid.

Early Action (EA): Similar to Early Decision, applications for Early Action are usually due in early November or December, and students receive an admissions decision earlier than those who apply with the regular decision deadline. Most times, EA decisions will be sent out by the end of December. The main difference between ED and EA is that EA is not a binding decision, and students still have the opportunity to consider acceptances from other colleges.

Restrictive Early Action/Single Choice Early Action (REA): This is essentially a hybrid of Early Decision and Early Action. Students submit their applications and receive an admissions decision early. They are not bound to the admissions decision, but they are restricted from applying early to other schools.

Regular Admissions- Regular admissions is an established deadline date for applications (commonly early January), and all admissions decisions are sent out to applicants at the same time, generally in the early Spring.

Rolling Admissions: Colleges that have Rolling Admissions deadlines review applications as soon as they are received and notify the applicant as soon as a decision is reached.

Making a College List

Junior year is a good time to begin researching colleges. If possible, schedule college tours to give yourself a chance to see the campus, meet current students, talk to professors, and tour classrooms and departmental programs. Don't be afraid to ask questions! This is your opportunity to learn as much as you can and determine if the college is a good fit for you. Remember, you may be spending the next four years of your life on this campus! If you are unable to tour the campus in person, take a virtual tour or sign up for a virtual admissions event.

When considering where to apply to college, it is generally recommended that students have a combination of reach, match, and safety schools included on their college list. For this, you'll need to understand how your high school grade point average (GPA), your college entrance exam scores (SAT and/or ACT), and the courses you've taken in high school match to the college's entrance requirements AND to the average GPAs and scores of students admitted.

Reach School: A reach school does not mean out of reach, it just means that the school may be more selective and your academic record may be on the lower end of what the college typically accepts. In other words, you may be admitted to this school.

Target School: Typically, at a target school, your academic record will be similar to the "average" student admitted to this school. In other words, you are likely to be admitted.

Likely or Safety School: A likely school will usually have either open enrollment (meaning anyone who submits a completed application is admitted) or will be considered a "less selective" institution. Your academic record will exceed the institution's requirements and averages for students admitted. In other words, you will almost definitely be admitted.

Factors to Consider when Choosing a College

There are many things to consider when choosing a college. Since one college may not have all the things you want, it is important to prioritize what you must have and what you may be willing to compromise on. The following are some things to consider when making your college list.

- Location- How far from home are you willing to be? Is there a particular area you would like to go to school? Do you prefer an urban, sub-urban, or rural environment?
- College size- Do you prefer a large (8,000+), mid-size (2,000-8,00) or small (2,000 or less) school?
- Academics- Does the college have your intended major? What is the student/faculty ratio? Are there opportunities for internships, research, and other learning experiences?
- Activities/Clubs- Does the school offer extracurricular activities that are of interest to you?
- Housing- What housing options are available? Is housing guaranteed for all students?
- Cost and financial aid- What types of scholarships and financial aid is offered? How much am I willing to pay or borrow for college?

A note regarding college costs: Don't necessarily eliminate a college from your list based solely on the tuition cost listed by the school. The "sticker price" you see for a college's tuition and other charges is not necessarily what a student will have to pay, as there are many types of aid and scholarships that colleges offer that are not reflected in the price tag. Some schools automatically offer aid based on a student's GPA, standardized test scores, or other factors. Look for the net price calculator on the college's website for a more individualized estimate of what it might cost you to attend the school. The net price calculator factors in things such as family income, GPA, and SAT/ACT scores and gives a better estimate of what that particular school might cost for you.

Standardized Testing

Many colleges and universities require submission of standardized test scores (SAT or ACT) as part of the application process. "**Test-optional**" schools do not require that you submit standardized test scores as part of the application process, but they may use them to determine scholarships or merit aid if submitted. It is important that you know the application requirements of the schools where you intend to apply. If you are unsure where you will be applying to college, it is a good idea to take the SAT or ACT, so as not to miss any deadlines if you later choose a college where scores are required.

It is generally recommended that students take the SAT or ACT in the Spring of their junior year. This gives you the opportunity to take the test again if you are not satisfied with your score, and still meet college application deadlines. Most schools will **super score** test results, meaning that they take the best score from each section of the test if taken multiple times. Testing should be completed no later than December of Senior year to ensure ample time for applications and scores to be submitted to the colleges of your choice.

Note that SAT and ACT scores are not required for application to community colleges. However, if a student has taken the SAT or ACT, the scores may be considered in lieu of required placement testing.

Testing Accommodations

Accommodations are modifications to the testing environment for students with documented disabilities or impairments. You may be eligible for testing accommodations based on your IEP or 504 plan. Examples of accommodations are: extra time, extra/ extended breaks, preferential seating, or testing in small groups. **Please see Ms. Del Papa for assistance in requesting test accommodations. This must be completed at least six weeks in advance of test dates, and prior to test registration for the SAT.**

SAT or ACT- Which test should I take?

Both of these tests are widely accepted for college admissions, so which test you take really depends upon which test format you prefer. The only way to know this is to take a practice test of each and see what you prefer. Some students opt to register for both the SAT and the ACT and submit the highest test scores to colleges.

	SAT	ACT
Subjects	Reading, writing & language, math	English, reading, math, optional essay. Includes a science reasoning section.
Test style	Evidence and content-based questions; focus on real-world situations and problem solving.	Straightforward; questions may be long but usually less difficult to decipher.
Math	Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trigonometry, Data Analysis. Some sections do not allow a calculator.	Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trigonometry, Probability & Statistics. Calculator allowed for all sections.
Scoring	Scale of 400-1600	Scale of 1-36
Registration	collegeboard.org	act.org

Some students may be eligible for a **fee waiver** for the SAT or ACT based on certain income and eligibility requirements. Please speak to Ms. Del Papa if you would like more information about fee waivers.

Financing Your Education

The cost of college can seem overwhelming but there are many different ways to finance your education. Oftentimes the price you see for college tuition is not what you will actually pay once financial aid is considered. Use the **net price calculator** found on most college websites to get a more individualized estimate of what a particular college may cost you. File your college applications and your financial aid application early, as you may have access to a larger pot of money from a college the earlier you apply. Financial aid is determined by the information received from the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA**.

Aid may be in the form of federal and/or state aid or **institutional aid**, which comes directly from the college or university. Students ineligible for government aid based on income may still be eligible for institutional aid based on other factors, so it is always important to complete and file a FAFSA. The FAFSA opens on October 1st and can be found at: www.studentaid.gov.

Types of Financial Aid:

- **Merit-based aid:** Financial aid given based on merit, without regard to income or financial need. Merit-based aid may be in the form of scholarships or grants.
- **Need-based aid:** Financial aid based on financial need, as determined by information received from the FAFSA.
- **Grants:** Grants are based on financial need and do not have to be repaid.
- **Scholarships:** Scholarships are generally based on merit for a given criteria, most often academics. Colleges may automatically award scholarship money as part of their financial aid package based on GPA or standardized test scores submitted at application. Scholarships do not need to be repaid.
- **Loans:** Loans are usually included in a student's financial aid package. This type of financial aid must be repaid and usually carries an interest rate.
- **Work-Study Programs:** Students can earn money working part time on their college campus. The student will earn a paycheck for the number of hours worked and many of the jobs may be related to their college studies or community service.

