

Senior Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to school and to an exciting, busy senior year.

There are thousands of institutions of higher learning in this country, and you will choose one of them to be your school. You will pay money and expend effort in the pursuit of further education. But on what basis will you make your decision? This Senior Handbook has been designed to take you step-by-step through the complexities of making these selections.

We hope you and your parents will find this handbook helpful and that you will refer to it frequently, using the forms supplied throughout the book as part of your admission and follow-up procedures.

Remember, your senior year is the springboard to your future. The grades you make, the activities in which you participate, and your foresight in planning ahead will have the greatest impact on being accepted by the college of your choice. Making that choice is one of the single most important decisions you will make in your lifetime, so make judgments carefully. Seek advice from your parents, teachers, and your guidance counselor. Your needs are our primary concern.

We are looking forward to a successful senior year!



Richardson ISD High School Counselors

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

We recommend that you read this handbook straight through and then continue to use it as a resource as you follow the suggestions. Each step may require effort over a period of time.

We also suggest that you purchase an organizational system to file the information that you will collect as you proceed in the college exploration process.

HOW TO USE YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Counselors are one of the best ongoing resources students have. We are your ally throughout the entire admission process. It is in your best interest for you to visit with us regularly. We can:

- Begin the admission process with you by identifying the questions - and finding honest answers. Think about questions such as "Do I want to stay near home? Does the college have my major? How important is size?"
- Review your academic record, suggest areas that need improvement, and recommend courses needed to qualify for college admission.
- Help you with information for filing testing applications and taking standardized tests.
- Provide specific information on your high school performance. Items such as rank-in-class, test scores, and grade point average are all details that colleges ask for when a student applies.
- Provide the necessary forms for financial assistance.
- Show you where to find more information, such as books, catalogues, brochures, and college websites that deal either with the admissions process or a specific college or university.
- Clarify or explain terms, ideas, and experiences for you that are encountered during readings, campus visits, or interviews with college representatives.
- Write a letter of recommendation to colleges or universities, complete secondary school and mid-year reports, and assist you with applications.
- Offer the emotional support, warmth, and encouragement that you will need during one of the most important periods of your life.

Note: We also want to be supportive to your parents. Please ask them to schedule an appointment to discuss any concerns they may have.



STUDENT'S 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.

If you think that your rights as a student have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to: Executive Director, NACAC, National Association for College Admission Counseling.

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 those deposits are available.

- Complete all material that is required for application, and submit your application materials on or before the deadlines.
- Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.
- Arrange, if appropriate, 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. 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 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.

OVERVIEW OF COLLEGES

KINDS OF SCHOOLS

You can acquaint yourself initially with a variety of colleges by talking to your counselor, searching the internet, and checking out view books and other published material available in the guidance office.

Although this list is not complete, most students choose an institution from one of the following categories:

COLLEGE:

An institution that offers educational instruction beyond the high school level in a two-year or four-year program.

UNIVERSITY:

An academic institution which grants undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields. They offer a wide range of academic choices and may provide great resources. Most introductory courses are being taught lecture style. Classes can be taught by graduate students. Professors at major universities are often involved in research.

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE:

A four-year institution which focuses on the education of undergraduate students. Because most liberal arts colleges are smaller than universities, classes tend to be smaller with more personal attention. These schools emphasize courses in humanities, social sciences, and sciences. In addition, they choose at least one area of in-depth study that is their college "major." Many employers look for graduates of liberal arts programs, valuing their well-rounded preparation.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

A two-year institution of higher learning which provides career and vocational training and academic curricula. These schools generally offer the first two years of a liberal arts education or specialized occupational preparation.

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS:

These institutions emphasize preparation for specific careers and enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they plan to study. You'll want to be sure of your direction before selecting one of these options.

MILITARY SCHOOL:

Federal military academies prepare officers for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Merchant Marines. These institutions are the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. They require recommendations and a nomination by U.S. senators or a U.S. representative. Private and state-supported military institutions, however, operate on a college application basis as does the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. They all offer degree programs in engineering, technology and many other majors with concentrations in various aspects of military science.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:

These institutions find their origins in the time when African-American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students at historically black schools have a unique opportunity to experience an educational community in which they are a part of a majority. They often find committed faculty mentors who encourage their expectations of success.

SIZES OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

SMALL



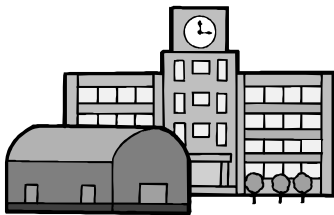
- ✓ Less than 2,500 students
 - Over 1,000 schools have less than 1,000 students
 - Less than 1,000 schools have 1,000-2,500 students
- ✓ Small classes
- ✓ Easy access to faculty
- ✓ May have somewhat limited academic resources, extracurricular programs, and social activities unless near other colleges or a member of a college consortium

MEDIUM



- ✓ 2,500-10,000 students
 - About 500 schools have 2,500-5,000 students
 - Under 400 school have 5,000-10,000 students

LARGE



- ✓ Over 10,000 students
 - About 320 schools have 10,000-30,000 students. Very few have 30,000 or more
 - May have large introductory classes taught by teaching assistants or videos
- ✓ Access to faculty varies
- ✓ Offer wide variety of academic, extracurricular, and social activities
- ✓ Cutting edge competition for some extracurricular opportunities such as varsity sports teams

COLLEGE SELECTIVITY

College requirements are rated in seven broad categories:

MOST COMPETITIVE:

Even superior students will encounter a great deal of competition for admission to the colleges in this category. In general, these colleges require high school rank in the top 10% to 20% and grade averages of A to B+. Many of these colleges admit only a small percentage of those who apply – usually less than one third.

HIGHLY COMPETITIVE:

Colleges in this group look for students with grade averages of B+ to B and accept most of their students from the top 20% to 35% of the high school class. These schools generally accept between one third and one half of their applicants.

VERY COMPETITIVE:

The colleges in this category admit students whose averages are no less than B- and who rank in the top 35% to 50% of their graduating class. These schools generally accept between one half and three quarters of their applicants.

COMPETITIVE:

This category is a very broad one. Some of these colleges require that students have high school averages of B- or better, although others state a minimum of C+ or C. Generally, these colleges prefer students in the top 50% to 65% of the graduating class and accept between 75% and 85% of their applicants.

LESS COMPETITIVE:

Included in this category are colleges that require entrance examinations but do not report median scores; and colleges that admit students with averages below C who rank in the top 65% of the graduating class. These colleges usually admit 85% or more of their applicants.

NONCOMPETITIVE:

The colleges in this category generally only require evidence of graduation from an accredited high school (although they may also require completion of a certain number of high school units). Some require that entrance examinations be taken for placement purposes only, or only by graduates of unaccredited high schools or only by out-of--state students. In some cases, insufficient capacity may compel a college in this category to limit the number of students that are accepted; generally, however, if a college accepts 98% or more of its applicants, it automatically falls in this category. Colleges are rated Noncompetitive if they admit all state residents but have some requirements for nonresidents.

SPECIAL:

The colleges in this category have programs of study that are specialized; professional schools of art, music, nursing, and other disciplines. In general, the admissions requirements are not based primarily on academic criteria, but on evidence of talent or special interest in the field. Many other colleges and universities offer special-interest programs in addition to regular academic curricula, but such institutions have been given a regular competitive rating based on academic criteria. Schools oriented toward working adults have also been assigned this rating.

SELF INVENTORY



Before you choose specific colleges to which you may apply, think about yourself and what a college must offer to meet your needs.

- YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD:**
- ◆ *Courses taken*
 - ◆ *High school grades*
 - ◆ *Standardized test scores (SAT I, ACT, SAT II, AP)*
 - ◆ *Class rank*
 - ◆ *Awards or honors*

- YOUR STRONG INTERESTS AND IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES:**
- ◆ *School -- athletics, arts, publications, leadership*
 - ◆ *Non-school -- work, volunteer, hobbies*
 - ◆ *Summer -- work, courses, travel, volunteer*

- YOU AS A STUDENT:**
- ◆ *Academic likes and dislikes: favorite subjects and least favorite subjects; research interests*
 - ◆ *Academic skills: strengths and weaknesses in abstract reasoning, reading, writing, problem solving, creativity*

ATTITUDES AND HABITS

ARE YOU...?

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Naturally curious... | ...or mostly indifferent? |
| A hard worker... | ...or a "coaster"? |
| Well organized... | ...or disorganized? |
| An active participant... | ...or quiet in your classes? |
| A good test-taker... | ...or a poor one? |

DO YOU...?

| | |
|--|--|
| Have good relationships with teachers... | ...or not very much contact? |
| Enjoy reading, writing, researching, and studying... | ...or tend to avoid these? |
| Work well under pressure... | ...or prefer a relaxed academic setting? |

YOUR PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

ARE YOU...?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| An independent experience seeker... | ...or do you prefer to play it safe? |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

DO YOU...?

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Like a diversity of people... | ...or people more like yourself? |
| Have liberal attitudes about politics and behavior... | ...or more conservative attitudes? |
| Like lots of privacy... | ...or prefer to be with people? |

Do you have any special health needs or other limitations?

YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS:

- ✓ Graduate school
- ✓ Career
- ✓ Life-style

YOUR IMAGE:

- ✓ How do people who know you well (parents, close friends, faculty) rate your interest, skills, and characteristics? Ask them!

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

ATMOSPHERE:

Any group of people working and living together creates its own atmosphere. Each college has a particular atmosphere or environment that affects the performance and satisfaction of each student there.

The type of atmosphere a college offers can best be discovered 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 are less expensive at a community college than 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 percent to the full cost, depending on your need. A good plan would be to choose several colleges, including one 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 also encourage students to apply to any of the two and four year state colleges and universities as they tend to have excellent programs at a reasonable cost.

LOCATION OF COLLEGE: IS ACCESSIBILITY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

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, and 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. There are also many colleges and universities which are in rural settings with widespread campuses located many miles from the nearest metropolitan areas. 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 two to four years of your life.

WORKSHEET FOR COLLEGE SELECTION

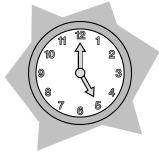
| CONSIDERATIONS | YOUR PRIORITIES | COLLEGE #1 | COLLEGE #2 | COLLEGE #3 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| LOCATION | | | | |
| SIZE | | | | |
| TYPE (PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE) | | | | |
| TYPE (2-YEAR VS. 4-YEAR) | | | | |
| DEGREE(S) OFFERED | | | | |
| ACADEMIC LEVEL OF STUDENTS | | | | |
| EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES | | | | |
| CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT | | | | |
| HOUSING | | | | |
| COST | | | | |
| SCHOLARSHIP/ FINANCIAL AID | | | | |

COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS WORKSHEET

College Designation Code:
 MC = Most Competitive CO = Competitive
 HC = Highly Competitive LC = Less Competitive
 VC = Very Competitive NC = Noncompetitive

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| NAMES OF COLLEGES | | | | |
| MC | | | | |
| HC | | | | |
| VC | | | | |
| CO | | | | |
| LC | | | | |
| NC | | | | |

| UNITS OF HIGH SCHOOL COURSES REQUIRED BY COLLEGES (1 UNIT = 1 YEAR) | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| ENGLISH | | | | |
| MATHEMATICS | | | | |
| SCIENCE | | | | |
| LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH (LOTE) | | | | |
| HIST/SOCIAL STUDIES | | | | |
| TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS | | | | |
| FINE ARTS | | | | |
| ELECTIVES ADVISED | | | | |
| TOTAL UNITS REQ. | | | | |
| SAT I OR ACT REQ. | | | | |
| SAT II/TEST REQ. | | | | |
| AP POLICY, IF ANY | | | | |



TIME MANAGEMENT PLAN: APPLICATION FLOWCHART

| | <u>COLLEGE 1</u> | <u>COLLEGE 2</u> | <u>COLLEGE 3</u> |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <u>COLLEGE DATA</u> | | | |
| COLLEGE NAME | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| COLLEGE ADDRESS | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| ADMISSIONS CONTACT | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| TELEPHONE | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <u>OFFICIAL DEADLINES</u> | | | |
| SAT I/SAT II TESTS* | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| ACT* | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| COLLEGE APPLICATION | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| CANDIDATE NOTIFICATION | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <i>*must be sent to the college from testing service</i> | | | |
| <u>COMPLETION DATES</u> | | | |
| APPLICATION | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT RECORD (TRANSCRIPT) | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| FIRST RECOMMENDATION FORM DELIVERED TO: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| SECOND RECOMMENDATION FORM DELIVERED TO: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| THIRD RECOMMENDATION FORM DELIVERED TO: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| SAT I SCORES MAILED | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| SAT II SCORES MAILED | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| ACT SCORES MAILED | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <u>HOUSING</u> | | | |
| HOUSING APPLICATION FILED: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| HOUSING DEPOSIT MADE: | _____ | _____ | _____ |

SENIOR PROJECT: COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS

PART I

The completion of this form is required prior to requesting counselor recommendations.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FOR COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS

PARENT RECOMMENDATION

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter may be applying for admission to a college which requires a counselor recommendation. We know that you have insight into his/her background, interests, special talents, and ambitions. Although you may feel biased, we welcome your comments. Please feel free to complete this form either individually or together; you may attach additional pages if necessary. When complete, please return this form as soon as possible to your counselor.

Name of student: _____ Student ID: _____
Parent or guardian: _____ Counselor: _____
Home address: _____ Zip Code: _____
Home telephone: _____ Business phone: _____
College major/interest: _____

I. To the Parent/Guardian:

- A. Tell what you would like the admissions committee to know about your son/daughter regarding:
1. Personal qualities
 2. Unusual talents
 3. Academic strengths
 4. Worthwhile community activities
- B. Describe the assets/characteristics that will set your son/daughter apart from thousands of college applicants.
- C. Explain your son's/daughter's role in the life of your family.
- D. Discuss your son's/daughter's reactions to any unusual circumstances and/or situation in your family life.

(May attach additional pages if you like)

WHAT DO COLLEGES CONSIDER FOR ADMISSION?

Most colleges consider a blend of your academic and personal qualifications. Some consider your academic qualifications only.

- ✎ *Almost all colleges require a high school Academic Achievement Record (transcript) and diploma. Requirements may be waived for some students (over 25, senior citizens).*
- ✎ *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 I or ACT scores in a certain range, specific academic courses, and GPAs above some level.*
- ✎ *Colleges that require standardized tests usually like a balance between verbal 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: | PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS ARE INDICATED BY: |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ High School courses--substance, diversity, and level of difficulty ✧ High school grades, <u>including senior year</u> ✧ Trends in grades (steady improvement, strong 11th grade record desirable) ✧ Relationship of grades to standardized test scores (high scores and poor grades undesirable) ✧ Rank in class ✧ Standardized test scores ✧ Academic honors and awards ✧ Recommendations from guidance counselor and teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Extracurricular activities, interests, 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 guidance counselor, one or two teachers, possibly an employer or a close friend -- people who know you well and appreciate your strengths and potential ✧ Application essays ✧ Personal interviews |

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- *Relationship to alumni (those who are influential or generous donors can help)*
- *Siblings at the college (especially if they are/were successful students)*
- *Geographic, ethnic, sex, socio-economic representation needed to balance a class*
- *Reputation of your high school*

GETTING ORGANIZED

As you browse college websites, you will find that not only do admission procedures vary in some respects from college to college, but they also vary within the seven categories listed below. You may know these general procedures already, but you must also know each college's procedures and particularly their deadlines for submitting applications. We have drawn up an admissions process calendar showing how all these procedures fit into a general timetable.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. Tests (sent directly from College Board or American Testing Program)
2. Campus visits (may be optional)
3. Interviews (may be optional)
4. Applications which include:
 - a. student's official school Academic Achievement Record (transcript)
 - b. personal statements
 - c. essays
 - d. resume (optional)
5. Recommendations by teachers, counselors, alumni and others
6. Financial aid applications if needed
7. Letters of acceptance, of wait-listing, of rejection

SENIOR ADMISSION PROCESS CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- ✧ Watch application deadlines for college admission.
- ✧ Explore college websites.
- ✧ Register for the SAT I and/or ACT.
- ✧ Listen to announcements and read Senior Newsletter (published by your guidance office) carefully.
- ✧ Attend the RISD College Fair.
- ✧ Visit college campuses.
- ✧ Request a social security number if you do not have one.
- ✧ Be conscious of maintaining good grades.
- ✧ Listen for announcements of college representatives visiting your local campus.
- ✧ Prepare a resume for the teachers you will ask to write recommendations.
- ✧ Turn in completed Information Sheet to your guidance counselor.

OCTOBER

- ✧ Take the SAT I or ACT.
- ✧ Ask teachers and your guidance counselor for a recommendation letter, if required by a college.
- ✧ Begin search for scholarship money or other financial aid.
- ✧ Apply for on-campus housing if you have not already done so.
- ✧ Visit college campuses.
- ✧ Plan SAT II: Subject Tests if needed.

NOVEMBER

- ✧ Complete application if your college has a December deadline.
- ✧ Continue to remember your grades.
- ✧ Listen to announcements and read Senior Newsletter carefully.

DECEMBER

- ✧ Complete any scholarship applications. Take SAT I and/or ACT if haven't yet done so.
- ✧ Assemble records needed to complete the financial aid form. Take SAT II: Subject Tests if needed.

JANUARY

- ✧ Complete your financial aid form online.
- ✧ Finish any applications for colleges or scholarships.
- ✧ Continue to be conscious of maintaining good grades.
- ✧ Turn in Mid-Year Reports to counselor if required by college.

FEBRUARY

- ✧ Register for the draft if male and 18 years old.
- ✧ Request seven-semester rank in class from your guidance counselor's office.
- ✧ Continue to work on various scholarship applications.

MARCH

- ✧ Consider admission and financial aid offers.
- ✧ Continue to work on scholarship applications.
- ✧ Register for Advanced Placement tests.
- ✧ Check out your college's policy regarding credit by exam.

APRIL

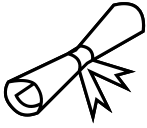
- ✧ Concentrate on graduation.

MAY

- ✧ Notify the college you will be attending regarding your acceptance, if required.
- ✧ Inform those colleges you are rejecting with a thank-you note.
- ✧ Request a final Academic Achievement Record (transcript) to be sent to college of your choice.
- ✧ Apply for housing deposit refund from schools you are rejecting and have reserved dorm space.



THINK GRADUATION!



RISD GRADUATION PROGRAMS

| | DAP (Distinguished Achievement Program) | Recommended Program | RISD High School Program (Previously Regular) |
|---|--|------------------------|--|
| ENGLISH* | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| MATHEMATICS* | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.0 |
| SCIENCE* | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.0 |
| SOCIAL STUDIES* | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| HEALTH* | .5 | .5 | .5 |
| SPEECH* | .5 | .5 | .5 |
| FINE ARTS* | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| PHYSICAL EDUCATION* | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH (LOTE)* | 3.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Additional Elective* | | | OR 2.0 |
| ELECTIVE COURSES* | 4.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 |
| TOTAL UNITS OF CREDIT | 26.0 | 26.0 | 24.0 |

**See course options in the RISD Secondary Program of Studies*

Distinguished Achievement Program

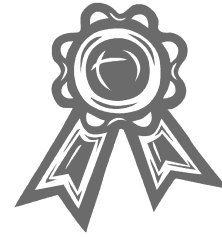
Students who wish to complete the Distinguished Achievement Graduation Program must:



- Complete ALL course requirements for the **Recommended Graduation Program**, and
- An additional unit of the same Language Other Than English (LOTE) – total of 3.0 units, Note: This will reduce the number of electives to 4.0 units. (The total number of units for graduation remains 26.)
- Complete four advanced measures (see page 18 of this handbook).

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

A Special Honors Seal for Graduation



Purpose of the Distinguished Achievement Program Seal

The purpose of the Distinguished Achievement Program is to recognize students who have performed at a level clearly beyond that expected of high school students. In addition to the course requirements, students must complete advanced measures at the college or professional level that are assessed by an external review process.

How Will an Award be Acknowledged?

Students who complete this program will have a seal affixed on their Academic Achievement Record (AAR) to reflect this honor.

Who Qualifies?

Students who wish to complete the Distinguished Achievement Graduation Program must:

- Complete ALL course requirements for the Recommended Graduation Program, and
- An additional unit of the same Language Other Than English (LOTE) – total of 3.0 units
Note: This will reduce the number of electives to 4.0 units. (The total number of units for graduation remains 26.)
- Complete four advanced measures. Students may choose any combination from the following list:
 - ↳ Earn a score of 3 or above on a College Board AP exam (each exam can count as one measure).
 - ↳ A score on the PSAT that qualifies a student for recognition as a Commended Scholar, or higher; as part of the National Hispanic Scholar Program; or as part of the National Achievement Scholarship Program (may count as only one advanced measure).
 - ↳ A grade of 80 (3.0) or higher on academic college courses that count for college credit.
 - ↳ Complete original research or project judged by a panel of professionals in the field that is the focus of the project; or conducted under the direction of mentor(s), reported to an appropriate audience, and related to the required curriculum set forth in §74.1 of the Texas Administrative Code (relating to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). A student may have a maximum of two research/projects which count as one of the four measures.

All Distinguished Achievement Program graduates fulfill the Texas Grant academic requirements.

No substitutions are allowed in the Distinguished Achievement Program Seal.

Please see your counselor if you wish to apply for the DAP seal.

**Class Rank:**

Colleges look at your assigned class ranking relative to the others in the class. Class rank is important as a means of showing admissions officers the level of competition you have encountered and how well you have achieved relative to that competition. Not all high schools compute class rank, although most public high schools will. Most private and some public colleges will determine a class rank for you based on GPA and select high school courses.



TEST REQUIREMENTS

You have been taking tests for years. Now you are asked to take tests to determine your capacity for higher education. The SAT I measures critical reading, math, and writing aptitude. The SAT II 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 several types of tests used for college admission. 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 REASONING TESTS: This test is identical to the PSAT in format and is designed to measure verbal, writing and mathematical reasoning ability. In addition, it measures your knowledge and usage of the English language and syntax. Many colleges require the SAT I for admission. You should take the SAT I twice, preferably in the spring of your junior year and in October of your senior year. Most colleges will accept your highest score.

ACT: (American College Testing Program.) Be aware that this test is not the same as the SAT II! 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, and a writing exam is also available.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS: Many colleges require three subject tests (SAT II) which measure knowledge in specific subject areas. SAT II tests are offered on several dates, but be sure to check the subject available at each time period in order to complete all tests required by the colleges you wish to attend.

AP: In May of each year, these three-hour examinations are given to students who have completed any AP course offered at one of the Richardson ISD high schools. If the student makes a certain score on the exam, college credit or advanced placement in college courses is possible.

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| The College Board & ACT number for your school is: | Berkner – 445841 | Lake Highlands – 441758 |
| | Pearce – 445839 | Richardson – 445840 |

EXAMINATIONS OFFERED BY COLLEGES/ UNIVERSITIES:

Many colleges/universities offer examinations that have been designed and prepared by departments within the university. Some colleges require a specific score on the SAT I (Verbal or Math) and the SAT II: Subject Tests of the Admissions Testing Program or the ACT to be eligible for credit by examination on a departmental test. These examinations usually require no fees and are administered during summer orientation. Consult the college(s) you are considering for information regarding departmental examinations.

CLEP: Contact your prospective university for more information about College Level Examination Program.

THEA: THEA provides information about the reading, mathematics and writing skills of the students entering public colleges or universities. The THEA Test has been approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board, under Senate Bill 286, *Texas Education Code, Section 51.3062: Texas Success Initiative (TSI)*, for use by Texas institutions of higher education as an assessment instrument for entering students. The THEA Test provides the diagnostic data required by this legislation.

The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) requires testing and advising of students who attend a public college or university. The program assesses a student's basic academic skills in performing effectively in college-level coursework. All students applying for admission to a Texas state-supported college **must** complete a Texas Success Initiative assessment (THEA or an approved TSI assessment).

Who Must Take the Test?

Students who plan to enroll in a Texas public college or university must take an assessment of academic skills before enrolling in any college-level coursework. The THEA test has been approved to meet these state testing requirements.

For further information about whether and when the student must be tested, contact the advising office at the Texas college or university you plan to attend.

Who is Exempt from Taking the Test?

There are exemptions. It is important that the student check with the testing office or the advising office at the college or university they plan to attend.

The *THEA Registration Bulletin* is your best information source, and is available at no cost in your high school counselor's or college admission's office. It is also online at <http://www.thea.nesinc.com/>.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS IN ADDITION TO COURSEWORK COMPLETION

TAKS: (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) This test is mandated by the Texas Education Agency and is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, which is the curriculum that is taught in the classroom. Students must pass all four parts of the test (English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science) in order to fulfill graduation requirements. The test is given for the first time in the spring of the eleventh grade, and if a student does not pass one or more subject-area tests, they will have several more opportunities to retake those tests.





MOST OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TESTING

1. What kind of test is the SAT?

The SAT Reasoning Test is a measure of the critical thinking skills you'll need for academic success in college. The SAT assesses how well you analyze and solve problems—skills you learned in school that you'll need in college. Each section of the SAT is scored on a scale of 200-800, and the writing section will contain two subscores. The SAT is typically taken by high school juniors and seniors. It is administered seven times a year.

SAT Question Types

The SAT includes a Critical Reading, Math, and Writing section, with a specific number of questions related to content.

The Writing Section Overview

| Time | Content | Item Types | Score |
|---------|---------------------------------|---|---------|
| 60 min. | Grammar, usage, and word choice | Multiple choice questions (35 min.) and student-written essay (25 min.) | 200-800 |

Short Essay

The short essay measures your ability to:

- ✓ Organize and express ideas clearly
- ✓ Develop and support the main idea
- ✓ Use appropriate word choice and sentence structure

You'll be asked to develop a point of a view on an issue, using reasoning and evidence — based on your own experiences, readings, or observations — to support your ideas.

The essay will be scored by trained high school and college teachers. Each reader will give the essay a score from 1 to 6 (6 is the highest score) based on the overall quality of the essay and your demonstration of writing competence.

Multiple-Choice

The multiple-choice writing questions measure your ability to:

- ✓ Improve sentences and paragraphs
- ✓ Identify errors (such as diction, grammar, sentence construction, subject-verb agreement, proper word usage, and wordiness)

The Critical Reading Section Overview

| Time | Content | Item Types | Score |
|--|---|--|---------|
| 70 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 20-min. section) | Critical reading and sentence-level reading | Reading comprehension, sentence completions, and paragraph-length critical reading | 200-800 |

The critical reading section, formerly known as the verbal section, will include short reading passages along with the existing long reading passages. Analogies have been eliminated, but sentence-completion questions and passage-based reading questions remain.

The Critical Reading Section measures:

- ✓ Sentence Completions
- ✓ Passage-based Reading

The Mathematics Section Overview

| Time | Content | Item Types | Score |
|--|--|--|---------|
| 70 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 20-min. section) | Number and operations; algebra and functions; geometry; statistics, probability, and data analysis | Five-choice multiple-choice questions and student-produced responses | 200-800 |

The SAT will include expanded math topics, such as exponential growth, absolute value, and functional notation, and place greater emphasis on such other topics as linear functions, manipulations with exponents, and properties of tangent lines.

Important skills formerly measured in the quantitative comparison format, such as estimation and number sense, will continue to be measured through the multiple choice and student response (grid-in) questions.

Students can use a four-function, scientific, or graphing calculator. The College Board recommends that students use a calculator at least at the scientific level for the SAT, although it's still possible to solve every question without a calculator.

The Math Section has two types of questions:

- ✓ Multiple choice
- ✓ Student produced response questions

The Unscoored Section

In addition, there is one 25-minute unscoored section, known as the variable or equating section. This unscoored section may be either a critical reading, math, or multiple-choice writing section. This unscoored section does not count toward the final score, but is used to try out new questions for future editions of the SAT and to ensure that scores on new editions of the SAT are comparable to scores on earlier editions of the test.

Test Order

The 25-minute essay will always be the first section of the SAT, and the 10-minute multiple-choice writing section will always be the final section. The remaining six 25-minute sections can appear in any order, as can the two 20-minute sections. Test takers sitting next to each other in the same testing session may have test books with entirely different sections.

2. What kind of test is ACT?

The ACT contains four curriculum-based tests that measure academic achievement in the areas of English, mathematics, reading and natural sciences. These tests are based on and are oriented toward the major areas of secondary and postsecondary instructional programs. The following is representative of the ACT:

| Section & Type of Questions | No. of Questions | % of total Questions | Time Limit |
|--|------------------|----------------------|------------|
| ENGLISH | 75 | | 45 min. |
| ↘ Usage/Mechanics (punctuation, Basic grammar and usage, sentence structure) | | 53% | |
| ↘ Rhetorical Skills (strategy, organization, style) | | 47% | |
| MATHEMATICS | 60 | | 60 min. |
| ↘ Pre-algebra and elementary algebra | 24 | 40% | |
| ↘ Intermediate algebra and coordinate geometry | | 30% | |
| ↘ Plane geometry | | 23% | |
| ↘ Trigonometry | | 7% | |
| READING | 40 | | 35 min. |
| ↘ Prose Fiction | | 25% | |
| ↘ Humanities | | 25% | |
| ↘ Social Studies | | 25% | |
| ↘ Natural Sciences | | 25% | |
| SCIENCE REASONING | 40 | | 35 min. |
| ↘ Data representation | | 38% | |
| ↘ Research summaries | | 45% | |
| ↘ Conflicting viewpoints | | 17% | |
| OPTIONAL WRITING TEST | 1 prompt | | 30 min. |

NOTE: Biology, physical sciences, chemistry and physics content areas are distributed over the different formats.

3. Why should I take the SAT I and ACT?

- **To place** your names on the mailing lists of the colleges and universities around the country which have entrance standards and programs which match your interest(s) and high school preparation.
- **To help** you assess your own level of readiness for college-level work compared to your peers all across the nation. This comparison is reported in percentiles on your score report.
- **To present** tests to the college as part of the application.

4. When should I take the SAT I?

You may take the SAT I as often as desired during your 12th grade year, but watch for college deadlines. You are encouraged to sign up for the October SAT I if you are not pleased with the score you earned in spring of your junior year.

5. When should I take the ACT?

When choosing a test date, you should consider application deadlines and allow four to seven weeks for ACT to process and mail your reports. We advise you to take the ACT when you have completed a substantial portion of the course work that the test covers. In most cases, college-bound students reach this point by the late spring of the junior year.

6. How should I prepare for these tests?

- **Take solid academic courses** at the most challenging level possible, in each of the four years in high school, including the senior year.
- **Read** from a wide range of books, magazines and newspapers. Focus on a weekly news magazine and read it from cover to cover on a consistent basis.
- **Become familiar with the test formats** including how the test is organized, the kinds of questions it asks, the terms and concepts it uses, and how it is timed and scored.
- **Consider** taking the RISD SAT and/or ACT preparatory classes.

7. How do the colleges use the SAT I and ACT scores in making decisions about admissions?

The scores are the common standard by which students from all parts of the country and from a vast range of schools are compared. For this purpose, the scores have been a reliable indicator.

8. If I do not test well, will the college take this into consideration relative to admission decisions?

If your scores are inconsistent with the level of work done in high school and with other elements of the overall application, their importance is reduced. Remember, the application process is designed to be an inclusive one which brings to the college those students who are prepared to be successful in the programs offered and are ready for the level of competition posed by the students already enrolled. Keeping you out of college is never the goal of an institution.

9. Where can I take the SAT I and II and ACT?

Richardson High School is a Testing Center for the SAT I and II and the ACT. **The Test Center code for RHS is 44-720 (SAT I and II) and 195270 (ACT).**

Lake Highlands High School is a Testing Center for the SAT I and II and the ACT. **The Test Center code for LHHS is 44-293 (SAT I and II) and 181550 (ACT).**

COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST INFORMATION:

The College Board tests (SAT I and II) require pre-registration. Visit collegeboard.com for information on specific test dates, test(s) given, etc.

↘ ***You must register for SAT I and SAT II on separate test dates.***

AP Tests - These exams are given in May of each school year. The student may or may not be enrolled in AP classes. However, the student is encouraged to take the AP course for that subject.

MOST OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SAT II: SUBJECT TESTS

1. What are the SAT II Subject Tests?

The Achievement Tests have been revised and are now called **SAT II: Subject Tests**. Students may choose from 18 specific subjects including the "**SAT II Writing Test**" which will be offered at every administration date. This test will require students to write an essay as well as answer multiple-choice questions based on usage, sentence correction, and revision-in-context.

Designed to measure student knowledge in a particular subject and the ability to apply that knowledge, the SAT II Tests will be used by many colleges in the evaluation of applicants and in the placement of new students at appropriate course levels. The tests are curriculum-based but are designed to be independent of particular textbooks, grading procedures, or teaching methods.

2. When should I take the tests?

You will probably do best on an SAT II Test if you take it as close as possible to completing a course (or courses) in the subject, while the material is still fresh on your mind. If you decide to take an SAT II Test in a subject you have not studied recently, you should review the course content material thoroughly and methodically, over several weeks' time. Last-minute cramming is not likely to be of much use.

To decide when to take the SAT II Tests, find out the requirements of the colleges to which you may apply. Colleges that use SAT II Tests results as part of their admissions process often require that you take the tests no later than December or January of your senior year. (While many colleges will accept November scores for early-decision, some may require earlier scores.) If the colleges in which you are interested use SAT II Tests results only to help with placement decisions, you might be able to take the tests late in your senior year.

DECIDING WHERE YOU WILL APPLY



THE CAMPUS VISIT AND COLLEGE EVALUATION ***RISD JUNIOR AND SENIOR STUDENTS***

- A maximum of four (4) college visitation days are available to students to be taken between the summer before their junior year and the end of their senior year, as determined by the student. A student may take no more than 2 days a year.
- Approved college visitations taken during the senior year will not be counted against senior final exam exemptions.
- To obtain approval for designated college visitations (excused absence), a student must; 1) submit a note from parent/guardian prior to planned college visit(s) indicating college location(s) and absence date(s); and 2) upon return submit documentation of visit(s) submitted on college letterhead that must include student's name and date of visit.
- Students who do not provide the necessary documents for absences for college visits will receive an unexcused absence.
- Students are responsible for making up any work missed during the absences.



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.

THE CAMPUS VISIT AS "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.

PREPARING FOR A COLLEGE VISIT:

- ✓ Arrange for your visit in advance. Avoid being a "drop-in."
- ✓ Many schools have special weekend events and tours. Some send brochures and registration materials to your school.
- ✓ Allow sufficient time for a college visit. (Preferably a full day - not less than half a day at each college).
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the college website before you arrive on campus
- ✓ Inform the college about your areas of interest, curriculum, activities, etc. Indicate whether you have applied for admission.
- ✓ Take a copy of your resume with you. (Refer to the sample in this handbook).
- ✓ Give careful attention to your appearance, grooming, and conduct. The campus interview facilitates "putting a face" with a name. Remember to put your best appearance forward. You are representing your high school and future applicants as well as yourself.

TRY TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- ✓ Visit several classes.
- ✓ Talk to the college students. Ask them about the academic and social life on campus. Staying in a dorm room is very helpful also.
- ✓ Take a notebook. After you have visited, make some notes while the information is fresh in your mind.
 - impression of facilities and campus
 - impression of faculty and students
 - instructional program and regulations
 - names and titles of officials you visited with while there

COLLEGE EVALUATION: WHAT TO LEARN AND ASK IN A VISIT

CLASSES

- ✓ What is the average size of class 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? (By department, major, randomly, etc.).

CAMPUS

- ✓ Does the campus appeal to you? Size? Is it easy to get around? Will you need a car? Is parking a problem?

HOUSING

- ✓ 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?
- ✓ What percentages of students live on campus? Off campus? Commute?

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

- ✓ How will the college/university be evaluating the student? What criteria are used in the process? (Test scores, GPA, rank, quota, area of study, recommendations, activities, other subjective factors)
- ✓ Application deadlines and procedures?

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? What is the procedure for applying? Deadlines? Work opportunities? Loans?
- ✓ Merit or no-need scholarships? Athletic or talent awards?

AFTER THE CAMPUS VISIT

- ✓ Write thank-you notes to the Director of Admissions or any other staff, faculty, or students who interviewed you. This should be done promptly upon returning home. Also, thank persons from your school who have helped you.
- ✓ See your guidance counselor -- discuss what you have learned.
- ✓ Review evaluations and impressions; rank this college on your list.



COLLEGE VISIT SUMMARY SHEET

Upon completion of your visit, write in your responses to the issues contained here. Do this for each college visited and then compare your summaries for each.

NAME OF COLLEGE: _____ LOCATION: _____

DATE OF VISIT: _____ INTERVIEWER: _____

Student Body

Impression of student body in terms of appearance, style, degree of interest and enthusiasm, diversity of their social religious, ethnic background.

Academic Factors

How serious about academics is the school and the student body? How good are the facilities for academic pursuits? How varied is the curriculum? How strict or flexible are the requirements?

Campus Facilities and Social Life

How complete and modern are the facilities such as dormitories, dining room, student center, cultural center, athletic facilities? How active is the social life? How diverse is it? What are the rules for students? Is it predominantly a commuter or dormitory campus?

Overall Impression

What did you like least and most; what seemed different or special about it? What type of student do you feel would be happiest here? Are you that type?

Rating

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the top grade) rate the college on the basis of your interest.



HOW TO MAKE A RESUME

The preparation of your resume is an excellent beginning for the student entering the college selection process. This resume will assist teachers in writing recommendations. It can also be used in college interviews.

There are many ways to organize and format a resume. Basically, the resume should reflect simplicity and clarity. The form is your option. Remember to include:

I. Standards

- A. Organized logically
- B. Neatly written or typed
- C. Free from spelling errors
- D. Presented in an outline form
- E. Limited to one page
- F. Honesty in qualifications and experience

II. Information to be included

- A. Name, address, phone number
- B. Small photograph of self (optional)
- C. Educational information
 - 1. Name and address of high schools attended
 - 2. Dates you attended each school
 - 3. Subjects studied - in general
 - 4. Awards and extracurricular activities
- D. Work experience
- E. Hobbies and interests
- F. Unique experiences (travel, camp, volunteer work, etc.)
- G. References (secure permission from person before using)
 - 1. Name
 - 2. Address
 - 3. Phone

APPLICATIONS AND FINAL COLLEGE CHOICES

NARROWING THE COLLEGE CHOICES

One of the questions asked most frequently is, "What should my final list of colleges include?" Inherent in this question are two considerations: first, how many schools should I apply to, and second, what range of schools should be included with regard to admissions competition?

We discourage you from adopting the "shotgun approach" of applying to a multitude of schools. We also discourage you, regardless of academic ability, to "put all of your eggs in one basket" by applying to only one institution or one level of college. As a general rule, we advise that you apply to approximately five schools which vary in terms of selectivity, but which have the most important features desired by you. Generally, we recommend that your final list includes schools from each of the following categories:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| REACH | Your top choice schools. It is fine in this group to include a couple of "long shots". |
| MID-RANGE | Schools that possess the significant features you desire and at which the probability of admission is even or slightly better than even. These are categorized as "realistic" schools. |
| SAFETY | Schools that have most of the features you desire and at which the probability of admission is "highly likely" to "certain". We refer to schools in this category as your "safety" schools. |

While there is no hard-and-fast rule, you usually include two or three schools from categories one and two and at least one or two schools from category three. Obviously those schools that qualify as "long shots," "realistic," or "safety," vary tremendously from student to student. We would like to emphasize that you are continually encouraged to apply to more than one "realistic" and/or "safety" school.



STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Use the sample information below as a guide to complete each step in the application process.

1. Access your college application through applytexas.org and/or commonapp.org or check with your prospective university for their application requirements.
2. Request an official Academic Achievement Record (transcript) to be to the college for which you are applying. Be sure to include a stamped addressed envelope. **The first Academic Achievement Record (transcript) is free; a fee for each additional Academic Achievement Record (transcript) is charged thereafter. It is essential that all Academic Achievement Record (transcript) be mailed by your school in order to be official.**
3. Colleges require that entrance exam scores are **sent directly by the SAT and/or ACT testing services**. When you register to take these tests, you may code in the colleges you want to receive your scores.
4. Check with your prospective college to see if mid-year transcripts and reports are required.
5. A final Academic Achievement Record (transcript) will be sent to the college you will attend. **It must be requested.**

PRELIMINARY DECISIONS: APPLICATION DEADLINES

Should you be an Early Bird or Regular Decision?



WHEN SHOULD YOU APPLY?

You should always refer to the application form or catalog to determine when to apply to a specific college.

- a) REGULAR DECISION:** Regular decision means that applications and supporting documents must be submitted by a set date in your senior year. The college then takes action on all the applications and notifies all students of its decisions at the same time.
- b) EARLY DECISION:** This is for students who select a particular college as a definite first choice. Usually you must apply early in the fall semester, must sign a binding agreement, and must withdraw applications elsewhere if the college accepts you.
- c) EARLY ACTION:** This term is commonly confused with Early Decision, but is actually different. Early Action has the same time frame as Early Decision, but is not a binding commitment upon you if you are accepted. If admitted with Early Action status, the college has promised you entry, but you do not have to withdraw other regular decision college applications OR commit to attending that college. You can apply to more than one college in early action.
- d) ROLLING ADMISSIONS:** Many colleges use the “rolling admissions” plan. This plan allows you to apply at any time after the college announces that applications will be considered and receive a decision fairly soon after your application is complete. Often, you must apply early to get adequate housing.
- e) OPEN ADMISSIONS:** Some colleges offer admission to all students who apply. Community colleges are an example of this type of admission.



SCORING POINTS WITH YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY

↳ *Why do colleges require essays for admission?*

- * to determine your writing ability
- * to determine if you will be a good match for the curriculum the college has to offer

↳ *Tips for writing college or scholarship essays:*

1. Show enthusiasm
 - ✓ about yourself.
 - ✓ about your life.
 - ✓ with originality.
 - ✓ with a sense of humor (avoid unless you are good at it).
2. Look at the application as if you were a member of the panel of judges
 - ✓ reflecting yourself as nearly as possible.
 - ✓ using your own language - own style.
3. Don't try to second guess the Selection Committee;
 - ✓ there are no such things as "sample essays."
 - ✓ "more" is not better - do not ramble just to have a longer essay.
 - ✓ have someone proofread your essay for errors.

Note: Quite often English teachers will read your work if you give them ample time.

4. Meeting deadlines is very important.
5. Keep in mind basic rules of grammar by
 - ✓ using proper rules of paragraphs.
 - ✓ being aware that faculty members sit on selection committees and have tendencies to read the essay as a paper to grade.

➤ ***Pitfalls to avoid in writing a college or scholarship essay:***

1. DON'T give your life's story.

Example: "I was born in ... I have three cats and two dogs ... I had my first date at age 14 ... etc." Instead, tell about a unique incident in your life and how you felt about the incident ... did it change your life in some way?

2. DON'T rehash experiences 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." ... 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? What changes have occurred? Stating that you have worked at a local store for three years is not unusual ... instead; tell how you are a different person because of your work experience.

3. Avoid getting on a "Soap Box."

Instead, cover one side ... have a logical number of arguments ... state your ground.

4. DON'T tell the university about themselves.

Example ... I really want to go to your school because it offers ... and then copy directly from the college catalog or summarize statements from the catalog.



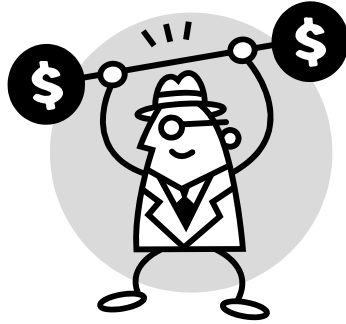


GETTING GOOD RECOMMENDATIONS

It is generally agreed that the teacher recommendation and the counselor recommendation are important aspects of many application materials. Keeping this in mind, consider carefully the teachers you select.

1. When you have decided which teachers you will ask to write your recommendations, be sure you take all the forms to them as soon as they are received. Fill out your part of the form before taking it to the teacher, including a copy of your resume. Add a note telling the teacher the exact date the recommendation is due. Request that they send the completed recommendation letter to your guidance counselor sealed in the envelope you provide. They may send the recommendation letter directly to the college, if they prefer. If the teachers will be mailing the recommendations themselves, make sure you provide an addressed stamped envelope.
2. Give plenty of notice! An acceptable period of time is four weeks prior to the request date.
3. Hand the information to the teacher personally. Do not leave it in his/her box or depend on someone else to deliver it for you.

THE FINANCIAL AID HURDLE



Because of the rising cost of attending college, more students are depending on financial aid to meet college expenses. Financial aid comes in the following forms:

GRANTS: based on financial need and do not have to be repaid

COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS: provide minimum wage for you in on-campus jobs

LOANS: have reasonable interest rates and do not have to be repaid until after you leave college

SCHOLARSHIPS: may be awarded according to need and achievement or may be awarded strictly for achievement.

TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID, YOU SHOULD:

- ✪ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) available on line at FAFSA.ed.gov.
- ✪ Check on line with the financial aid officer of the college to inquire whether the college has its own financial aid form which you must complete in addition to the other form listed.
- ✪ Check on line with the financial aid director or the scholarship committee chairman of the college to inquire about general academic scholarships.
- ✪ Check on line with or call the chairman of a given department in a college (example: Engineering or Music) to ask for application procedures for departmental scholarships.

Several weeks after you have filed the financial aid form, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). After the report has been checked for accuracy, it should be signed and sent to the financial aid officer of the college you will attend. When the college financial aid office awards a financial aid package, you should acknowledge, in writing, acceptance of the financial aid. If you, however, decide not to accept the financial aid award, you should notify the college financial aid office of this decision.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

The scholarship process requires time, work, and dedication on the part of you and your parents as well as school personnel. You and/or your parents have the responsibility for:

- ✦ Investigating scholarships via scholarship bulletins from your guidance office. You may also freely access the scholarship files in the guidance counseling office, and online sources;
- ✦ Contacting the financial aid officer(s) of the college(s) being considered;
- ✦ Reading the Senior Newsletters and listening for announcements carefully and saving them for references for scholarship deadlines.
- ✦ Investigating possible scholarship opportunities available via your parents' employment, the college or university you will attend, community organizations, and other sources;
- ✦ Applying for local scholarships through the guidance counseling office.

FINANCIAL AID SUMMARY:

- ✦ Attend the financial aid workshop sponsored by your guidance counselors.
- ✦ Complete and file the required financial aid forms(s).
- ✦ Apply early.
- ✦ Be accurate.
- ✦ Keep copies of income taxes.
- ✦ Register for selective service if you are a male.
- ✦ When questions arise, ask your college financial aid officer for help.



WHERE TO FIND FINANCIAL INFORMATION ONLINE

You can save a lot of money by searching for a college on the World Wide Web. You'll find test-taking help, advice from education experts on choosing a college, help searching for scholarships and financial aid, and the colleges themselves. Here is a list of starting points:

CollegeNET

<http://www.collegenet.com/>

- Another college search with featured schools, financial aid, graduate programs. Apply to many schools over the internet with this service.

DCCCD Scholarship Information

<http://www.dcccd.edu/>

FAFSA

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Federal Trade Commission & Info on Scholarship Scams

<http://www.ftc.gov/>

Financial Aid Information

<http://www.finaid.org/>

Kaplan Educational Centers

<http://www.kaplan.com/>

- The arch competitor of the Princeton Review in the test-preparation business, Kaplan has a useful site with similar information.

Mapping Your Future

<http://mapping-your-future.org>

Sallie Mae

<http://www.salliemae.com/>

Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Association

<http://www.tgslc.org/>

The College Board

<http://www.collegeboard.com>

- This impressive site includes a comprehensive online college-search interview as well as SAT schedules and online test registration.

The Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com/>

- The Princeton Review is a major publisher of college guides and test-preparation books and software. You'll find samples of everything here, including an SAT you can download and take for practice, and detailed information on more than 300 top colleges.

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/index.html>

- Current news from the Department of Education.

U.S. News

<http://www.usnews.com/usnews>

- *U.S. News* rattles cages every year with these rankings of top colleges and universities. Check out their "Rankings and Guides" section.

Windows on State Government

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/scholars>

Yahoo College and University Entrance Page

<http://dir.yahoo.com/Education/>

- A comprehensive set of links to colleges, admissions offices, test-preparation companies, and other sites dealing with college admissions and financial aid.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ADMISSIONS COUNSELING (NACAC)

SEAL OF APPROVAL PROGRAM

CollegeData.com

<http://www.collegedata.com/>

- CollegeData.com is a Web site that offers information and tools for college planning.

CollegeSTEPS

<http://www.wellsfargo.com/student/planning/>

- CollegeSTEPS is a national college preparatory program for high school students from Wells Fargo Education Financial Services.

CollegeView

<http://www.collegeview.com/>

- CollegeView is a CD-ROM and Web-based college search and application service.

Destination College Calendar

<http://www.studentloan.com/>

- “Destination: College, The Citibank Guide to College Financing,” is a comprehensive planning calendar designed to help students and their families learn about the college planning and financial aid process.

eCampusTours.com

<http://ecampustours.com/default.aspx>

- eCampusTours.com is a college planning Web site.

My College Options

<http://mycollegeoptions.com/index.asp>

- My College Options is a free service designed to match college-bound students with the colleges and universities aligned with their personal and educational goals.

Think Ahead: College Aid Calculator (CAC), Early college-cost Estimator (EccE), and College Cost Forecaster (CCF)

<http://www.collegeaidcalculator.com>

- Think Ahead’s software estimates both Expected Family Contribution (EFC) – what a parent and student may be expected to pay toward college costs – and helps all families (whether they qualify for financial aid or not) to set college saving and borrowing goals.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND PROCEDURES

HOW DO YOU SELECT A COLLEGE IF YOU HAVE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES?

Students with learning difficulties should begin college planning early to accumulate necessary evaluations and test results needed to do realistic planning for college.

Your parents must carefully examine the programs and services available to identify a number of colleges that meet your individual needs. There is no one best college for students with learning difficulties. Rather, there are a number of colleges that probably meet your needs. You should apply to a number of desirable colleges in hope of being accepted by one or more.

You may reference the checklist on the following page as a resource.

SEE YOUR COUNSELOR FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

CHECKLIST FOR COLLEGE PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Directions: Write the name of each college to be evaluated at the top of the columns to the right. Review the information you have obtained and answer each question. Write YES or NO as the answer for each question. Do this for each program.

1. Are the following items used to evaluate students with learning difficulties for admission?
 - Untimed SAT I or ACT
 - Autobiographical statement
 - Psychoeducational report
 - Personal Interview

2. Is diagnostic testing available to students with learning difficulties?

3. Is subject-area tutoring available?

4. Is basic skills remediation available?

5. Do staff members of these programs as well as academic advisors help these students with learning difficulties to plan their academic programs?

6. Are special courses available?

7. Are the following auxiliary aids provided?
 - Taped textbooks
 - Tape recorders
 - Calculators
 - Computers
 - Word processors
 - Others

8. Are the following auxiliary services provided?
 - Alternative exam arrangements
 - Notetakers
 - Advocacy
 - Others

9. Are the following counseling services available?
 - Individual
 - Small group
 - Advising
 - Career
 - Others

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TAKING YOUR SPORTS TO COLLEGE

Recruiting is a complicated process. There are required rules which are set out by the NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA and other groups which govern the athletic recruiting process. Your coaches have copies of the literature detailing those guidelines. Work closely with them if you are planning on being a recruited athlete.

Additional information can be obtained through your school guidance counselor and the following resources:

- ◆ *RISD Program of Studies*
- ◆ *NCAA website - <http://www.ncaa.org/>*
- ◆ *NCAA Clearinghouse website - <http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.org>*
- ◆ *NCAA Clearinghouse Customer Service 877-262-1492*
- ◆ *NAIA website – <http://www.naia.org>*

OTHER POST-SECONDARY CAREER TRAINING OPTIONS

Junior or Community Colleges

Junior or Community Colleges offer two types of programs. One is the transfer program for those students who plan to attend a four-year college. The other program is a career preparation program that leads to an associate degree or some type of certification program.

Many students attend a junior college and pursue a degree program that stresses competency in job entry skills. Students earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree for successful completion of these programs. A limited number of these programs may transfer to senior institutions which offer baccalaureate degrees in applied technology. Care should be taken to establish whether a particular program is transferable prior to entering the program.

The community college also offers programs which provide competency certificates. These programs are sometimes only one year in length. The junior college will provide information regarding Associate of Applied Science Degrees or competency certification.

Dallas Community College District offers comprehensive technical/occupational programs on its campuses.

Public Technical Schools

Public institutions offer technical/vocational training in a variety of fields at a cost that is often below private technical schools. Texas State Technical College at Waco, Amarillo, Harlingen, and Sweetwater; Universal Technical Institute in Houston; and Institute of Electronic Science at Texas A&M are Texas technical schools.

Military Service

Students interested in entering the military services after high school should contact representatives from the branch of military service of interest to the student and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of such a choice. These advantages include but are not limited to pay, training, travel opportunities, vacations, opportunities to meet people, educational benefits, family benefits, and retirement. The disadvantages include but are not limited to physical risk, regimentation, subordination to authority, frequent transfer, impossibility of resigning, lack of privacy, and minimum individual activity. The branches of military service are United States Air Force, United States Army, United States Coast Guard, United States Marines, and United States Navy.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Special thanks to the many authors of books listed below which often were utilized as resources for this handbook. Many may be located in your guidance office, school or local library and may also be purchased at local bookstores.

- Barron's Profiles of American Colleges**, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Woodbury, New York.
- Best Buys in College Education**, Edward Fiske (Time Books).
- Comparative Guide to American Colleges**, James Cass and Max Birnbaum, Harper and Row.
- Don't Miss Out**, Leider and Leider.
- 50 College Admission Directors Speak to Parents**, Sandra F. MacGowan and Sarah M. McGinty.
- Getting In**, Paulo DeOliveiria and Steve Cohn.
- How to Beat Text Anxiety and Score Higher on Your Exams**, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Woodbury, New York.
- How to Get Into the Right College**, Edward B. Fiske. (Illustrations by Nishan Akgulian).
- How to Prepare for the American College Testing Program**, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Woodbury, New York.
- Insider's Guide to Colleges**, Yale Daily News.
- Insider's Guide to the Top 25 Colleges**, Tom Fishgrund.
- Lovejoy's College Guide**, Simon and Schuster.
- Money for College! How to get it**, Donal Moore, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Woodbury, New York.
- PACT, National Association of College Admission Counselors.**
- Paying for your Education: A Guide for Adult Learners**, The College Board, New York.
- Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study**, Peterson's Publishing.
- Peterson's Guide to College Admissions.**
- Peterson's Guide to Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students**, 2nd Ed.
- SAT Success**, Peterson's Publishing.
- Scaling the Ivy Wall**, Howard Greene and Robert Thinton.
- Selective Guide to Colleges**, Edward Fiske
- The College Board Admissions and Guidance Services.**
- The College Cost Book**, The College Board, New York.
- The College Handbook and Index of Majors**, The College Board, New York.
- The Gourman Report**, National Education Standards.
- The One Hour College Applicant**, Lois Rochester and Judy Mandell.
- The Other Route into College: Alternative Admission**, Stacy Needle.
- The Public Ivies**, Richard Moll.

APPENDIX



INTERNET CONNECTION

Top College Searches on the Internet

College Board Online

<http://www.collegeboard.com>

CollegeNET

<http://www.collegenet.com>

CollegeView

<http://www.collegeview.com>

Careers and Colleges

<http://www.careersandcolleges.com/>

Jesuit Colleges & Universities

<http://www.aicunet.edu/>

College for All Texans

<http://www.collegeforalltexans.com>

My College Guide

<http://www.mycollegeguide.org>

Peterson's Education Center

<http://www.petersons.com>

The Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com/>

ONLINE INFORMATION ABOUT MAJORS AND CAREERS

Career Magazine

<http://www.careermag.com>

Career Builder

<http://www.careerbuilder.com/>

CareerNet

<http://careers.org/>

Career Services

<http://www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca/>

Career Resource Homepage

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/cdc/>

College Majors 101

<http://www.collegemajors101.com>

FINDING COLLEGE HOME PAGES

Colleges and Universities Search

<http://www.universities.com>

Global Computing—American Universities

<http://www.globalcomputing.com>

NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

**National Association of Student Financial
Aid Administrators**
<http://www.finaid.org>

Employment Guide
<http://www.employmentguide.com/>

Cornell Career Searches
<http://www.career.cornell.edu>

The Online Career Center
<http://www.occ.com/occ>

Planning a Career
<http://www.tgslc.org>

Princeton Review
<http://www.princetonreview.com>

**Scholarly Journals Distributed Via the
World-Wide Web**
<http://info.lib.uh.edu/>

**University of Delaware Career Services
Center**
<http://www.udel.edu/CSC/>

The Monster Board Career Center
<http://www.careeradvice.monster.com/>

INVESTMENT ADVICE

College Board Online: Pay for College
<http://www.collegeboard.com/pay/>

Smart Money
<http://www.smartmoney.com/college/>

Young Money
<http://www.youngmoney.com>

BANK LOANS

Citibank
<http://www.citibank.com>

Nellie Mae Loan Link:
<http://www.nelliemae.org>

Sallie Mae
<http://www.salliemae.com>

PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS

College Board online

<http://www.collegeboard.org>

FastWeb

<http://www.fastweb.com>

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

<http://www.ed.gov/students/>

COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

College Funding Company

<http://collegefundingco.com>

Peterson's Planner

<http://petersons.com/>

ETHNIC AND MINORITY SCHOLARSHIPS

Armenian Student's Assoc. of America

<http://www.asainc.org>

USEFUL OFF-CAMPUS WEB SITES

**American School Counselor Association
(ASCA)**

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Greek Pages

<http://www.greekpages.com>

**American Society of Association
Executives (ASAE)**

<http://www.asaenet.org>

Hillel

<http://www.hillel.org>

Black Excel

<http://www.blackexcel.org/>

University Links

<http://www.ulinks.com/>

The Chronicle of Higher Education

<http://chronicle.com>

USNews Online--School Rankings

<http://www.usnews.com/education>

College Fair News

<http://www.nacacnet.com>

World Alumni Net

<http://www.alumni.net/>

ADDITIONAL COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS AND PLANNING

Careers and Colleges

<http://careersandcolleges.com/>

Students' Link to Government

<http://www.students.gov/>

College Net

<http://www.collegenet.com/>

Peterson's Education

<http://petersons.com/>

**National Association of College
Admission Counseling (NACAC)**
<http://www.nacacnet.com/>

Cappex
<http://www.cappex.com>

Zinch
<http://www.zinch.com>

College View
<http://www.collegeview.com/>

Campus Tours
<http://www.campustours.com/>

Collegiate Choice
<http://www.collegiatechoice.com/>

College Visits
<http://www.college-visits.com/>

Global Computing
[http://www.globalcomputing.com/CollegesCo
ntent.htm](http://www.globalcomputing.com/CollegesContent.htm)

TESTING

College Board Online
<http://www.collegeboard.com>

Educational Testing Service
<http://ets.org/>

Texas Common Application
<http://applytexas.org>

The Princeton Review
<http://www.princetonreview.com/>

Fair Test
<http://www.fairtest.org/>