

# **COLLEGE ADMISSIONS HANDBOOK**

**Benjamin Franklin  
High School**



## COLLEGE ADMISSIONS HANDBOOK

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**Benjamin Franklin High School**  
**2001 Leon C. Simon Drive**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana 70122**

**School Telephone Number: (504) 286-2600**  
**Counselors' Telephone Number: (504) 286-2603**  
**Fax Number: (504) 284-3901**

**SCHOOL CODE # 192-006**

**Dr. Timothy Rusnak, Executive Director**  
**Ms. Javelyn Lyons, Secretary**  
**Ms. Janet DeGrazio, Counselor**  
**Ms. Beatrice Flair, College Counselor**  
**Ms. Tanya Jones, School Social Worker**

**Counselors' Offices: Enter Room 219-B**

Benjamin Franklin High School parents thank these information sources for this handbook: Janet DeGrazio, former Counselors Ron Wegener, Nancy Webb Olinde, Saramae Dalferes, and Nancy Brothers, the National and Southern Associations for College Admission Counseling, NPR's *All Things Considered*, The College Board, and The Wall Street Journal. Big thanks to Davidson College.

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# INTRODUCTION:

## THE COLLEGE SEARCH & APPLICATION PROCESS

You are ready to embark on a wonderful process to help define your life and your future. To help you, the information in this handbook is arranged to guide you through your Junior and Senior years. Chapter 1 details timetable and deadlines. The second chapter lets you establish a realistic evaluation of yourself, including your academic and nonacademic strengths and weaknesses. The third continues on. **Remember:**

...you don't have to do any of this process alone. Your parents, counselors, and teachers want the best for you, and will provide lots of support. Just ask! Get help with essay ideas or proofreading, inside information about which colleges are strong in areas you enjoy, or a late run to the main post office for a postmark deadline.

### General Tips and Suggestions

Take the **PSAT, SAT, some SAT Subject Tests**, and the **ACT** test during your **Junior year**. Test dates are in Chapter 1. Please read the following message (directly from the College Board website) about the new Score Choice program for the SAT and Subject Tests.

### Introducing Score Choice

#### A New Way to Report Your SAT Scores

We know that many of you may feel anxious about taking tests. So we've tried to make the SAT experience a little less stressful by giving you what you've asked for—a new way to report your scores to colleges and scholarship programs.

Score Choice gives you the option to choose which scores (by test date for the SAT and by individual test for SAT Subject Tests™) you send to colleges—in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice. You can choose scores from one, several, or all SAT test dates.

The College Board worked with colleges and universities to help you understand which scores they would like you to send. You can view the score-use practices of participating colleges and universities at the time that you're asked to send scores.

Colleges and universities will only receive the scores that you send them—your scores will not be released for admission purposes without your specific consent.

#### **Remember to take advantage of your four free score reports when you register for the SAT!**

SAT scores are processed as quickly as possible after the test and are sent automatically to you and your chosen colleges and scholarship programs. Within nine days of taking the test, you will be able to add, change or remove a college or a scholarship program from your score report. If you want to order more than four score reports, or send score reports more than nine days after the test, it will cost additional money for each report.

Learn about the range of college and university choices, how to select the schools you should investigate, and how to investigate them. Work toward a “long list” of colleges – a dozen or so – which suit your needs. Chapters 3 and 4 will help.

As you learn about colleges and their strengths and weaknesses, your investigation can become more aggressive. Get the information you need from the Internet or other programs, from your counselors and teachers, and from other sources in Chapter 5.

Make *direct contact* with schools and obtain their brochures and application forms. If possible, you should also have visited your first few campuses by Mardi Gras break in your Junior year. That is a good time because colleges are in session while you are off.

The objective of your investigation is to narrow your field to a “short list” – five or six colleges – that you will definitely apply to. Chapter 5 guides you through the winnowing of the good from the inappropriate, and shows you some tools that will help you select a reach school, your target schools, and one or two safety schools.

Finally you will complete the applications for admission and financial aid in accordance with each school’s deadlines.

Eventually you will have to make some difficult and practical choices. Will you stay in New Orleans? What can your family afford? (See Chapter 7) Will you follow your dreams? Will you be a techie or a fuzzy? Or both? Remember this, though...

***You don’t have to make life-defining decisions, just opportunity-enhancing ones.***

## DETAILED COLLEGE APPLICATION CALENDAR

### JUNIOR YEAR

#### **December**

Registration deadline for the January SAT/Subject Tests given at National Test Centers.

#### **January**

Registration deadline for the February ACT given at National Test Centers.

Early January – Ms. DeGrazio and Ms. Flair meet with juniors during English class.

Last Saturday in January – SAT and SAT Subject Tests

#### **February**

First Saturday in February – ACT

Registration deadline for the March SAT & SAT Subject Tests

Registration deadline for the April ACT given at National Test Centers.

If you can get away for Mardi Gras, schedule some college campus visits. See page 4-1. Review the Personal Assessment beginning on page 2 - 1.

**Make an appointment with college counselor** for an individual conference to discuss college plans. Put appointment date on your calendar. Parents are invited to attend. Bring this handbook with you to the appointment.

Read the Counselors' Bulletin that comes out regularly through **Naviance**, the college bulletin board and listen to the morning announcements for current information concerning visits of college representatives, scholarship applications, special programs, and summer opportunities.

**Begin using the College Resource Room** from 7:30 AM. to 3:45 PM.

It is open for students and parents. Some resources may be checked out overnight. College admissions guides of all sorts; CD's, view books, and catalogs from individual colleges and universities; Financial aid information; Computers for your college essays, college and scholarship searches.

During the school day you need a yellow pass to visit the College Resource Room. Get a blank pass from the display rack in the Counselors' Office. Your classroom teacher must sign it before your visit. Give the pass to the counselors' secretary and sign in. Sign out when you leave and have the secretary sign your pass. Return the signed pass to your classroom teacher.

Save all college related materials (SAT, ACT registration booklets {or copies of online registration confirmations}, all standardized test scores reports, scholarship information, self-evaluation, activity sheet.

**Talk to your parents this month about what you can realistically expect them to pay for college. See the financial section in the back of this handbook.**

Students taking ACT or SAT tests must have a photo ID in order to be admitted to the testing center. Obtain a Social Security number, if you do not already have one. Many colleges still use this as you're application file number.

**Register for ACT, SAT, and SAT Subject Tests.** The Benjamin Franklin school code is 192006. **All juniors should have a complete set of these tests by the end of June.** Register online and keep track of your account information. ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)).

Take SAT Subject Tests for courses you took in freshman or sophomore years. Carefully check the dates on which specific subject tests are offered. Some colleges and programs require SAT Subject Tests that must be taken in junior year – possibly at the completion of course you are currently taking.

Investigate summer opportunities available through colleges, international exchange programs, camps, National Park Service, service organizations, and corporations in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

If you are interested in attending the United States Military, Naval, or Air Force Academies, meet with your Senator or Congressman during junior year to begin the nomination and application process. Also attend the Summer Seminars for these institutions

## **March**

Second Saturday in March – SAT.

Registration deadline for Advanced Placement (AP) Exams in May. See Main Office.

Registration deadline for May SAT & SAT Subject Tests given at National Test Centers.

Check credits for graduation with counselors. You need 24 credits, including specific required courses such as Free Enterprise and Civics.

Register for senior year courses with counselors. Consider concurrent enrollment at a local college, depending upon schedule. Credits obtained often transfer to your college choice.

Use *Naviance*, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or similar Internet sites to create your personal profile, search for financial aid and colleges, and make electronic inquiries.

Sort all the college mail and brochures into “**YES**,” “**MAYBE**,” and “**NO**” piles. Keep a simple tally sheet with school’s name or initials and the reasons for your yes/no decision or your impression in just 4 or 5 words.

Add the earliest deadline date for admission or financial aid for “yes” and “maybe” schools.

B.U.	yes	Dec 15	great hockey team, easy in to Boston!
XYZ	no	--	not selective, my major not offered.

Start a college filing system for your “YES” and “MAYBE” schools:

Use “The Crate Method” to organize your information. Use a big pocket folder, a file box, or a milk-crate type hanging file system from office supply store.

Make a list of possible college choices from your tally sheet. Discuss college options with your parents. See the chapter on creating your “long list” of colleges beginning on page 3-1. Continue to use the resources in the College Resource Room.

Visit local universities to get a feel for a college information session and for varied campus styles. Then, consider visiting colleges as you make spring break and summer travel plans.

Call college admission offices well in advance to schedule an interview appointment. Some colleges offer group sessions and campus tours instead of individual meetings. See the section beginning on page 4 - 1 for tips on making the most of your college visits.

Investigate scholarship opportunities through businesses, professional organizations, religious organizations, civic clubs, etc. [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), [www.collegeanswer.com](http://www.collegeanswer.com), [www.scholarship.com](http://www.scholarship.com).

## **April**

First Saturday in April – ACT

Read college brochures as they arrive in the mail. Sort into your Yes, No and Maybe groups. Continue your tally sheet quick notes.

Start studying for exams and AP exams.

## **May**

First Saturday in May – SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

Registration deadline for the June SAT/Subject Tests given at National Test Centers.

Registration deadline for June ACT given at National Test Centers.

AP Exams given at Ben Franklin.

Study for final exams. The grades at the end of junior year are used to compute your cumulative grade point average (GPA). The transcript sent to colleges includes courses and grades received through the end of the junior year. Senior year grades are used to confirm that a student has maintained the same level of performance.

## **June**

First Saturday in June – SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

Second Saturday in June – ACT.

Write to/email colleges for information and applications for admissions and scholarships. Sample letters are available. Study the materials when you receive them.

Begin writing rough drafts of application essays. We have samples of 'winning' essays.

Apply for housing at state universities. Deposits are usually refundable. Colleges and universities have different policies - investigate.

Write your self-evaluation, which is due in the Counselors' Office on registration day in August. Ask your parents and a peer to write their parent and peer letters of recommendation (brag sheets), due at the same time.

Develop an Activity Sheet listing all activities both in and out of school that you have participated in during grades 9-12. Include activities you plan to participate in. You should list Junior Achievement if you take Free Enterprise at Franklin. Travel and hobbies may be lifelong. Indicate the amount of time you spent in order to show your level of involvement. This is your brag sheet. Boast shamelessly. Be honest, but inclusive. This activity sheet goes with your transcript, so it must be typed and turned in to the Counselors' Office when your peer, parent letters and self-evaluation are submitted.

## **SENIOR YEAR**

### **August**

**Registration Day** – Self evaluation, peer and parent recommendations, and typed Activity Sheet are all due in the Counselors' Office. See Chapter 6

## September

2<sup>nd</sup> week of September – Registration deadline for October SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

15<sup>th</sup> – Deadline to requests transcripts to meet October 15<sup>th</sup> application deadlines.

3<sup>rd</sup> week of September – Registration deadline for October ACT.

4<sup>th</sup> week of September – Registration deadline for November SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

Attend the Benjamin Franklin COLLEGE NIGHT (6 - 8 PM)

Check transcript and notify counselors if corrections are needed. Keep your copy in your college pocket folder. **Check credits for graduation.** Remember, you need 24 credits including one fine arts credit.

Make appointment with college counselor to finalize selection of 6 to 8 colleges.

Go over essay rough drafts with English teachers and/or counselors.

Meet with college admission representatives when they visit Franklin. Check the schedule on college counselor's door, weekly announcements, and on-screen announcements. Obtain green pass from display rack in Counselors' Office. **Students must have prior permission from teachers to miss classes and are responsible for all work missed.**

Attend evening programs given by individual colleges and universities. They are open to all interested students and parents. This is a good way to meet local alumni as well as college representatives. Most show DVDs, serve Cokes, and answer individual questions in depth.

**Obtain applications from colleges immediately, including admission, honors, financial aid, special scholarships, and housing applications. Write or call the college directly!**

Register for ACT, SAT, or SAT Subject Tests, if you plan to retake tests.

Set up a file for each college you are considering. Make a profile for each college, and a check sheet to keep track of your progress with each school, something like this:

College	Finalize your search			Essay		High School Record and Recommendations						Financial Aid					Notification : Acceptance mailed	
	Application form requested	Financial aid form requested	ETS & ACT scores sent	Campus tour, interview	Essay draft, finalized	Application draft, finalized	Recommendation requested:	Recommendation Who?	Rec. mailed	Forms given to counselor?	Application deadline	Application mailed	FAFSA	CSS Profile	Deadlines	Forms filled		Forms mailed

Maintain your folder with copy of your transcript, score reports, test registration materials, and weekly announcements. Keep all college mail until you have completed applications.

Decide which decision plan you will use: early decision / early action / regular decision. Early Decision or Early Action applications may be due now!

**Mark your calendar with:** application-, transcript request-, and scholarship **deadlines**, interview appointments, College Night, scheduled visits by colleges at BFHS.

Ask a junior or senior teacher now to write letters of recommendation for you. The same teacher normally writes all of your letters. Ask teacher for his/her deadline. Well before deadlines, provide recommendation forms and stamped, addressed envelopes for each college to which a letter is to be sent. Indicate in writing the deadline for each college.

## October

1<sup>st</sup> – Deadline to requests transcripts to meet November 1<sup>st</sup> application deadlines.

If you are applying early decision or early action and will receive notification by December 15<sup>th</sup>, submit transcript request forms for additional schools and write "Hold until December 15".

1<sup>st</sup> week of October– SAT and SAT Subject Tests given at National Test Centers.

15<sup>th</sup> – Submit requests for transcripts by today to meet November 15<sup>th</sup> application deadlines.

October 15<sup>th</sup> – Deadline to requests transcripts to meet December 1<sup>st</sup> application deadlines

3<sup>rd</sup> week of October - ACT given at National Test Centers.

Register for the **CSS Profile** (at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) if the colleges or universities to which you are applying require the Profile as a second needs analysis form.

Visit colleges if possible. Many colleges schedule high school weekends. If you cannot visit, arrange for a local interview with a college representative or local alumnus.

Devote time, energy, and thought to writing required college essays. Some applications also require several short-paragraph responses. Work on those, too.

## November

1<sup>st</sup> week of November– SAT and SAT Subject Tests given at National Test Centers.

1<sup>st</sup> week of November – Registration deadline for December SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

5<sup>th</sup> – Deadline to requests transcripts to meet December 15<sup>th</sup> through January 14<sup>th</sup> application deadlines.

15<sup>th</sup> – Submit requests for transcripts to meet January 15<sup>th</sup> application deadlines.

Be sure you know each deadline for admission, honors, financial aid, and housing. Every deadline is different – even for the same college

Complete college applications and essays during Thanksgiving break. Have someone else **PROOFREAD** everything before you mail it. So that items don't get misfiled, use full name and Social Security No. on all correspondence with colleges.

If mailing your applications, **PHOTOCOPY EVERYTHING YOU SEND TO COLLEGES:** Application, essays and check. Either enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard in each application for the

college to let you know that it was received or send via Certified Mail. Federal Express is not necessary if you budget your time. If sending applications electronically, **KEEP TRACK OF CONFIRMATION NUMBERS**

ALSO – FOLLOW-UP WITH THE COLLEGES to make certain they received your application and that your file is complete.

**Male students MUST register with the Selective Service Bureau when you turn 18.**

## **December**

1<sup>st</sup> week of December (TBA) – Attend Financial Aid Seminar, even if you think you are not eligible.

1<sup>st</sup> week of December – SAT and SAT Subject Tests given at National Test Centers.

2<sup>nd</sup> week of December – ACT given at National Test Centers.

15<sup>th</sup> – Submit requests for transcripts by today to meet February 1<sup>st</sup> application deadlines.

3<sup>rd</sup> week of December – Registration deadline for January SAT and SAT Subject Tests

Before winter break work the **FAFSA4caster** at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to estimate student and parents' expected family contribution to allow last minute financial strategies. FAFSA must be signed, dated and postmarked (or sent electronically as soon as possible after January 1). Everyone should apply at least the first year. Often campus jobs and federally subsidized loans require that you have filed the FAFSA. Do not eliminate yourself from sources of aid by not filing. Also, some FAFSA money is first come - first served, so do not delay.

## **January**

1<sup>st</sup> – Send in FAFSA and CSS-Profile financial aid forms as soon as possible. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid is required at all schools and for Louisiana's TOPS.

1<sup>st</sup> week of January – Registration deadline for February ACT, if needed.

First day after winter break – Submit requests for transcripts by today to meet February 15<sup>th</sup> application deadlines.

15<sup>th</sup> – Request mid-year transcripts be sent to colleges/universities to which you have applied.

Bring **Mid-Year Report** forms and stamped, addressed envelopes to your counselor. If no form, just bring stamped addressed envelopes with your name on the back.

3<sup>rd</sup> week of January – SAT and SAT Subject Tests - last date for seniors.

Confirm that all admission application materials, including recommendations, have been sent on schedule.

## **February**

1<sup>st</sup> week of February – Registration deadline for March SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

1<sup>st</sup> week of February – ACT given - last test date for seniors.

Notify colleges and universities of honors or awards received since application was sent. Prioritize list of colleges to which you have applied. Look at the pros and cons for each school. Talk with parents about college costs as you rank each school.

Check your transcript. Notify counselors if corrections are necessary.

Notify counselors as you receive replies from colleges. Stop by to talk or leave a note. Bring in letters of all scholarship offers from colleges you applied to and any independent scholarship offers to the Counselors' Office for us to photocopy for our files.

Seek and apply for private scholarships.

### **March**

2<sup>nd</sup> week of March-- Registration deadline for April 4th ACT if needed for TOPS.

2<sup>nd</sup> week of March– SAT and SAT Subject Tests given.

15<sup>th</sup> – Deadline to register with Main Office for AP Exams in May.

Notification of admission and financial aid awards start to arrive.

### **April 2010**

1<sup>st</sup> week of April – ACT – last chance to earn TOPS ACT score

15<sup>th</sup> – By this date, you should have received all admissions decisions and financial aid awards.

**If the decision is "wait-list" or "deferred," consult your counselor immediately.**

Attend Spring Testing at LSU or UNO for placement...dates to be announced.

Visit first choice college or university if you have not already done so.

Compare admission/financial aid offers and make your final decision on which college you will attend.

### **May**

1<sup>st</sup> – Official acceptance /reply deadline. Your decision to attend your college must be confirmed with a deposit. **NO DOUBLE DEPOSITS.** Double deposits may result in cancellation of admission at both schools.

Early May – take AP exams.

Write a "thanks, but no thanks" letter to schools you will not attend. Silence is not a reply. Sample letters are available.

Write a thank you note to all teachers, alumni, and friends who wrote recommendation letters for you. Let them know where you were accepted and where you plan to attend.

Bring to the Counselors' Office a stamped envelope, addressed to the one college to which you wish your final transcript to be sent. Put your name on the back of the envelope.

**If you are disappointed in your college acceptances, see the college counselor immediately. Counselors receive a list of colleges with openings in May.**

Complete "College Matriculation" form and return it immediately to the Counselors' Office. Study for exams.

**Final grades are important.**

Return all borrowed materials, sports equipment, and library books.

Late May – **GRADUATION! CONGRATULATIONS!**

## **COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST DATES**

Descriptive booklets and free sample tests for ACT and SAT tests are available in the Counselors' Office.

**SAT and SUBJECT TESTS and AP Exams:** Check the College Board website for test dates – [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Fees go up every year. 10-11 Registration Fees SAT -\$48.00. REGISTER ON TIME – late fees range from an additional \$23 to \$60. SAT Subject Tests -\$21.00 fee, plus: \$21.00 Language with Listening (LL), \$10.00 other Subject Tests

**ACT:** Check the ACT website for test dates – [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Again, fees go up every year. 10-11 Registration Fee: \$48.00 (ACT Plus Writing) - REGISTER ON TIME – late fees range from and additional \$21 to \$40

**EVERY YEAR fees WILL GO UP.**

**JUNIORS:** Take a complete set of SAT, SAT Subject Tests, & ACT standardized tests by June of junior year

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# TAKE A LOOK AT YOU

## **Your Needs, Your Values, Your Aspirations**

The college admission search process begins with you. What are your own needs and aspirations? Once you have some goals -- however vague -- the search will become easier. Thus, it is important to do some self-assessment before and during your look at colleges and universities.

Examine your strengths and your limitations, your likes and dislikes, your needs and interests. Think about your priorities. Write them down on these pages.

## **Goals and Values**

- 1. What aspects of high school have you enjoyed most?**  
In class?  
  
Out of class?
- 2. What values are most important to you?**  
  
What do you care about most?  
  
What concerns occupy most of your energy, effort, and thoughts?
- 3. How do you define success?**  
  
Are you satisfied with your accomplishments to date?  
  
What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
- 4. Which events, people, or experiences have shaped your growth and your way of thinking?**
- 5. What types of jobs or careers appeal to you?**
- 6. What are your academic and personal strengths and weaknesses?**
- 7. What adjectives would your closest friends use to describe you?**

*Any of your answers to these questions could also lead to appropriate themes for your college application essay. Write down any thoughts that occur to you during this survey.*

## **Academics**

### **1. What are your academic interests?**

Which courses have you enjoyed most (and done well in)? [This may be the most important question of all.]

Which courses have been the most difficult for you?

### **2. How would you describe Benjamin Franklin High School?**

Are learning and academic success respected here?

If you could, what would you preserve about Franklin? What would you change?

### **3. How do you learn best? Do you prefer lectures, or discussions?**

Do you like to read, discuss issues, and exchange ideas?

What was your most stimulating intellectual experience in recent years?

### **4. Is having close interaction and attention from your teachers important to you?**

Or do you prefer more anonymity?

### **5. Has high school been challenging for you?**

What challenges you the most?

Do you want to continue the same level of challenge in college?

### **6. Have you worked to your potential thus far in high school?**

What do you see as the best measures of your potential for college work?

### **7. Have any outside circumstances affected your academic performance?**

after school job?

excessive school activities?

parental pressure?

diagnosis of a learning difference?

home responsibilities or difficulties?

problems with course scheduling?

illness or emotional stress?

factors unique to your experience

## **Activities, Interests, and Hobbies**

- 1. What extracurricular activities do you enjoy most?**
- 2. Of the activities you most enjoy, which do you want to continue in college?**
- 3. Are there activities that you have not been involved in high school that you might like to explore in college?**
- 4. Do you enjoy being a leader?**  
In which activities have you held or hope to hold leadership roles?
- 5. Have you been recognized in particular activities with awards or honors?**
- 6. What was your most significant contribution to Ben Franklin High School?**  
What are you most proud of?
- 7. After a long, hard day, what do you enjoy doing most?**  
What do you do for fun? What do you enjoy doing for relaxation?

[Be sure to complete the Activities Sheet on page 50. It is due on Registration Day.]

Memo:

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# YOUR NEEDS IN A COLLEGE

Write brief answers to these general questions now:

1. **Why do you want an education?**  
Why are you going to college?  
What do you hope to gain from college?  
Are you interested in career preparation, technical training, or general knowledge?
2. **What are you looking forward to in college?**
3. **What worries you most about going to college?**
4. **How much structure and guidance do you need?**  
Would you succeed at a school where you are rarely told what to do?
5. **What degree of academic challenge is best for you?**
6. **Which of your academic pursuits require special facilities, programs, or opportunities?**
7. **Which of my extracurricular pursuits will require special facilities, programs, opportunities, or location?**
8. **Will you need any special support services? (study skills, counseling, handicap services, etc.)?**
9. **Would I enjoy living in a different part of the country?**  
How often do I want to be able to go home?  
What region has good opportunities for internships & careers in my major?
10. **What types of climate do you like?**
11. **Do you prefer ...a fast paced environment with something happening most of the time? ...an organized environment with lots of planned activities you can join ? ...a relaxed environment where you can (or must) go your own way? ...a little of each?**

## CREATE YOUR "LONG LIST" OF POTENTIAL COLLEGES

Begin now to identify college characteristics that fit with your own self-assessment.

You only want to look closely at the colleges that may be good for you. Major characteristics listed on this page are the first step to finding just those schools that are possible matches.

Later in this chapter you will find a more detailed list of characteristics. Narrow your search to less than two dozen schools that seem to have what you want. That is your "long list."

## **Major characteristics**

### **Purpose**

Liberal Arts? Technical? Pre-professional? Vocational? Is my major (probable major) offered? Which undergraduate degree is offered in my major.

### **Enrollment**

Size: Total number of undergraduate students on campus Coed or single sex. National, international, or regional student body?

### **Selectivity**

Average SAT scores and GPA of freshman class.

### **Location**

Geographic region, including distance from home, travel costs and convenience, and climate.

### **Setting**

Urban or rural.

### **Type**

2-year or 4 year; public or private; college or university.

### **Costs & Financial Aid**

Budget for tuition and fees\*, room and board, books, personal expenses. Percent of students receiving need-based financial aid/scholarships. Percent of students receiving merit-based financial aid/scholarships

\* Tuition and fees are important factors that are related to prestige, selectivity, region, and whether the school is public or private.

It is important to have a frank discussion with your parents about what your family can afford to pay for college.

However, while working on your long list, cost alone should not rule out any college.

Do talk to your counselor about this early on, so s/he can begin looking for special opportunities for you.

# HOW TO FIND YOUR "LONG LIST" OF COLLEGES

## **Start with your counselors.**

Meet with them early on (and often) in your college search. They will help you use the College Room, the Internet, and other resources.

## **On the Internet:**

Kaplan's website: <http://www1.kaplan.com> has a very good college search program. It is quick, flexible, and easy to use. The selections are ranked by their suitability to your profile, so you can grab the top 60-or-so and quickly pare the list down to two dozen for your "long list." Also try [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

You (and your parents) can use the computer labs for your college search. They are open from 7:45 AM and during study hall. Check lab rules about signing in and avoiding reserved classroom lab sessions. Get a pass before school to work during study hall.

## **Manual search:**

Our subject-area catalogs lists the colleges that offer degrees in your intended major. Start there and narrow the list down by states and finally by specific schools. Repeat for each of your possible majors. There are also catalogs that list schools by other criteria, such as religion, sports, and location. Use as many resources as are appropriate for you.

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## **At Home:**

You probably already have a pile of mail from colleges that want you to consider them in your search. There may be a good reason to do so. Sort that pile into Yes, No, and Maybe piles. Reply to the Yes and Maybe schools.

## **CONTACT ALL THE SCHOOLS ON YOUR LONG LIST DIRECTLY**

Contact directly by letter, reply card, phone, website, or e-mail every college on your "long list" and any colleges you are curious about or which you think may meet your selection criteria. Get the information. It's free and there is no obligation. Do it now. You do not have to wait until you are sure you want to apply.

Find the college's address and the name and title of the head of admissions in a College Handbook, in our files, or on the internet.

Ask for admissions and financial aid information. Be sure to provide the following information:

your full name	social security number	"Benjamin Franklin High School"
your full address	graduation month and year	school code 192-006

Keep brief notes of these contacts in your journal: date, school, person's name & position, what you asked for or talked about, and what they discussed or seemed interested in.

It is important that you contact the colleges yourself, even if we have information about your schools, because:

1. Colleges prefer students who are mature enough to act for themselves.
2. Schools cannot recruit you if they don't know you're interested.
3. Some of our material may be old. You need the latest admissions and financial aid forms.
4. Many colleges and universities track the number of contacts a student has made.

**Always keep in mind that the people you are contacting are adults. So practice the usual courtesies of respect neatness, unusually clear speech, and spell check. ALSO, NO TEXT MESSAGE SHORT CUTS!**

**Be especially wary of mail-merging names and schools when using word processing. You do not want School X's name to appear in your letter to School Y.**

If they contacted you first, it may help later in financial aid negotiations. So if you sense that they mail-listed you after they saw your PSAT scores or something, start your letter with the "Thank you for sending me..." line.

[your full address and zip]

### Sample first letter/email (or response) to college

[date]

[name and position of head of admissions]

[department (usually: Office of Undergraduate Admissions)]

[university].

[address and zip]

Dear Dr./Dean/Mr./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_

[or if unknown, use: Ladies and Gentlemen]

[Thank you for sending me [brochure, letter,...]]\* I am interested in beginning studies in [your major(s)] at [university] in the fall of \_\_\_\_.

Please send me your current undergraduate general catalog, and all necessary admissions and financial aid applications.

I will graduate from Benjamin Franklin High School (192-006) in New Orleans, Louisiana, in May of \_\_\_\_.

I am active in [interests, activities] in New Orleans. Please let me know if there are similar opportunities at [university].

Sincerely

[your full name]

SSN: [your social security number]

Telephone: (504) [your phone number]

e-mail: [your e-mail address]

# WHERE TO LOOK FOR INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

## **College Guidebooks, Catalogs, and Reviews**

General college guide books (the big catalogs and reviews) can give you a good quick source of answers and comparisons. They have admission office names and addresses, tuition, financial aid, and other topics in a consistent format. Franklin's College Resource Room has most of the guides available. Others are available at libraries and bookstores. If we do not have it, we can probably get what you need.

Some guides are all-inclusive. Some focus on specific regions, majors, religions, sports, etc. Look at several different guidebooks. Be sure the guides you use are up-to-date.

## **College View Books, Video and Interactive CD-ROM Tours, and Catalogs**

The admissions information that you ask the colleges to send you, as well as Franklin's files of college view books, brochures, and recruiting videos will give you a good overview of each school. The undergraduate catalog lists course offerings, requirements, & curriculum options.

Keep in mind that these are all advertisements that show the good side of each school. No pictures of rainy days or students trekking through snow or slush. They will give a good overview of the school and its mission -- and invite you to look further.

## **College Websites**

All colleges have a page on the internet -- usually at [www.the school's initials.edu](http://www.the school's initials.edu). At most sites you will see the school's entire view book and catalog or take a photo tour sitting at your computer. Each site will also provide an e-mail link or address (often it is [admission@the school's initials.edu](mailto:admission@the school's initials.edu)) to request more information.)

The college resource room and the library have printed lists of college website addresses or you can view the list at Franklin's own website, [www.benfranklinhighschool.org](http://www.benfranklinhighschool.org).

## **Talk with your counselors**

Nothing pleases your counselors more than sharing their knowledge to help you through this challenging and rewarding task. They know everything (or they know where to look.)

You do not have to wait for an invitation, though at busy times you may need to make an appointment. The counselors' secretary knows where everything is.

## **Talk with your teachers, parents, and peers**

What courses did you enjoy and do well in? Is that a possible major? Talk to your teacher about careers and which colleges have the best career potential. Ditto parents and peers.

## **College Night**

College Night at Franklin is held in the fall. This is an opportunity for students and parents to talk with admissions and alumni representatives from more than one hundred different colleges and universities in a concentrated time.

The best way to use College Night is to be organized: Decide in advance which schools you would like to explore. Write down questions you need to ask the representatives. Carry a pen and notebook to take note of the answers you receive. To save time filling out information cards, bring neatly prepared self-stick labels with:

your full name	graduation month and year
your full address	"Benjamin Franklin High School"
social security number	school code 192-006

## **High School Visits**

Admissions and alumni representatives schedule visits to Franklin during the fall. The schedule of visits is listed in the counselors' bulletin, announced in morning PA announcements, and posted on the bulletin board. Unlike College Night, these visits give you the chance to hear a formal presentation about the college and to ask more detailed questions.

These representatives are your liaisons to the admissions committees. **It is important to meet with them so they can put a name and face together. You need to attend these meetings!**

## **Information Programs and Receptions offered locally**

Many colleges and universities will host special information programs or receptions during evenings in the fall. They are usually held in hotel meeting rooms in New Orleans or Metairie and are open to juniors and seniors from all area high schools. Frequently there will be a member of the admissions staff plus a local alumnus. Sometimes a current student from the school will be there to make a presentation or answer questions.

These events usually include a video or slide presentation and an in-depth question and answer period. Snacks and Cokes are often served.

## **Talk with Alumni and Currently Enrolled Students**

Alumni who live in New Orleans can be good sources of information. Some schools have teams trained to give interviews and talk with students.

You may know of students from Franklin who attend a college or university you are interested in. Try to meet with them when they are home for a break, or correspond with them by e-mail.

## **Personal and telephone interviews with college representatives and alumni**

See the section on college visits and more specifics about interviews on page 4-3.

## **College Campus Visits and Tours**

Nothing can replace your own firsthand account of a college campus. A thorough college campus visit is the best way to gain an understanding of the opportunities that a college community may

offer, and it can give you a sense of how you would feel as a member of that college community. A college visit allows you to peek below the surface presented in view books, college guides, and presentations.

When you take a student-led tour, pump the student guide for all kinds of information about student life, the difficulty of classes, a sense of community, and the students' perception of security, housing, and how many students finish in four years.

Get to know a little about the student guide - his major, his career plans, his maturity - so that you can judge whether his ideas about the college are really valid for your needs. Look for more specifics about college visits in Chapter 4.

## COLLEGE RESOURCE ROOM

Franklin's College Resource Room holds a wealth of information on individual colleges and universities.

Current view books, catalogs, brochures, and special notices of programs or scholarships offered at individual schools are filed alphabetically by college in the file drawers. General college admission handbooks and interactive software on CD's on our shelves provide factual information on American colleges and universities. There are also opinion guides which are helpful in raising questions for you to pursue as you talk with college admission representatives. Videos on our wall rack are available for almost 200 colleges. They may be played on our computers or checked out. Additional guides and resources may be found at bookstores, the public library and on the World Wide Web.

Most books, videos, and CD's may be checked out after 3:30pm and must be returned before homeroom the next morning.

The college room has a DVD player and 200 college DVDs. The DVDs may be signed out overnight. Better yet, check the school's website for a virtual tour!

## USEFUL WEB SITES:

**Benjamin Franklin High School's Home Page:** [www.benfranklinhighschool.org](http://www.benfranklinhighschool.org)

**Naviance Family Connection:**

<https://connection.naviance.com/fc/signin.php?hsid=bfhsla>

**TOPS** [www.osfa.state.la.us](http://www.osfa.state.la.us)

**Scholarship Searches and Financial Aid Help:**

[www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)

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

[www.scholarshipamerica.org](http://www.scholarshipamerica.org)

[www.ScholarshipCoach.com](http://www.ScholarshipCoach.com)

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)  
[www.collegeanswer.com](http://www.collegeanswer.com)  
[www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com)

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

### College Searches: other than the one on Family Connection:

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

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

[www.review.com](http://www.review.com)

#### Louisiana Board of Regents:

[www.regents.state.la.us](http://www.regents.state.la.us)

– link to the Academic Common Market

#### The Common Application

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

#### Louisiana Department of Education

[www.doe.la.us](http://www.doe.la.us)

#### Colleges and Universities via the Internet

[www.tulane.edu/~laprofe/College.htm](http://www.tulane.edu/~laprofe/College.htm)

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Assemble a profile of each college on your list to find those that fit your needs and wants.

Which ones deserve closer investigation, visits, and ultimately, your application for admission? See page 3-13 for a sample profile sheet.

To compare your ideal college profile to your list of colleges, use a combination of the resources and activities listed on the preceding pages.

Decide which of the factors below are important to you and how the colleges compare.

Major factors (*in italics*) have already been answered by your preliminary research.

[Some answers can only come from students at the colleges, like your student tour guide or a recently graduated alumnus, or from your own judgment of your campus visit.]

### Student Enrollment characteristics

**Enrollment** Total number of undergraduate students on campus.

**Retention** Percent of freshmen who return for their sophomore year  
Percent of freshmen who graduate  
Percent of freshmen who graduate *within four years (or less?)*

#### Students

**Like Me** Highly selective?  
Percent of commuters / residents.  
Regional diversity of student body.  
*Coed or single sex. Male / female ratio.*  
Ethnic diversity of student body, percentage of minority students.

Percent with need-based financial aid

## Location and surroundings:

Location      *Geographic region*  
Distance from home.  
Travel costs and convenience.  
Economy and industry (jobs) in the area.

**Setting**      Climate: number of outdoor days, how long and cold is the winter?  
*Urban / rural.*  
Nearest city / nearest countryside.  
Recreation opportunities that interest me.  
Cultural opportunities that interest me.  
Appearance, age, and maintenance of surrounding community.  
Crime statistics of surrounding area.

## College Type and Philosophy:

Type            2-year or 4-year; Public or private; College or university.  
Purpose        *Liberal Arts / Pre-professional (bus, med, ed, sci, engin) / Vocational-Technical*  
*Undergraduate degrees offered.*  
Graduate degrees offered in my field?  
Undergraduate internships, research, student work offered in my field?  
Philosophy    Traditional or experimental.  
Deeply scholarly or career-focused.  
Heritage and special traditions?  
Calendar      Semester, trimester, quarter.  
Acceleration..  
AP credits accepted for credit, for advanced placement only, or none?  
Overall General reputation.  
Value (quality as compared to cost).  
Alumni accomplishments.  
Parents' preference.  
Recruiter's attitude.

## Curriculum:

Academic      Required freshman courses.  
Requirements Core curriculum.  
Major requirements.  
Courses Offered Breadth and depth of courses in my major and department.  
Quality and reputation in my major.  
Interdisciplinary courses.  
Strongest departments.

## Independent

<b>Study</b>	Individual tutorials. Seminars. Opportunities for research. Can undergrad students assist in significant (graduate-level) research?
<b>Special Programs</b>	International programs. Internships, cooperative work-study programs, field work. Joint degree programs: double majors, minors, etc. combined undergraduate-graduate program <i>Pre-professional programs</i>
<b>Standards</b>	Accreditation of college. Accreditation of major department or professional program. Degree requirements. Grading system/Honor system.

### **Academic environment:**

<b>Faculty</b>	Faculty fully staffed? (financial strength of institution) Percentage with PhD's. Number of Nobel laureates, etc. Emphasis on research or teaching. Faculty course load each semester. Number of freshman and core courses taught by grad students or teaching assistants (TA's).
<b>Faculty and students</b>	Faculty/student ratio. Ranges of class sizes in freshman year and in later years. Opportunities for discussion or exchange of ideas within the classroom. Faculty advising system? Number of office hours per week. Faculty involvement in student life.
<b>Academic Demands</b>	Workload, course expectations. Types of assignments. Academic pressure or competition.
<b>Intellectual Vitality</b>	Student attitudes toward learning. Interest in political, social, or world issues. Community service opportunities or requirements.
<b>Career Preparation</b>	Pre-professional programs. Direct link to graduate program? Percent in my major who go on to graduate or professional schools. Accreditation and reputation of professional program. Career Aids    Career advising and information. Job placement program. On campus recruiting. Employment rate (and salaries) upon graduation
<b>Facilities</b>	Quality of main library. Number of books, number of periodicals. Library in my major.

	Academic buildings, labs, and classrooms.
	Computer facilities.
	Athletic facilities.
	Recreational facilities.
	Student life center.
	Appearance, age, and maintenance of campus.
	Transportation around campus.
	Security arrangements and campus crime statistics.
<b>Type of students</b>	Diversity / homogeneity.
	Tolerance of differences.
	Geographic diversity vs. regional.
	<i>Selectivity (SAT and GPA ranges).</i>
<b>Campus Community</b>	Controversial campus issues.
	Liberal / directive / restrictive social regulations.
	Spirit of competitiveness.
	Student involvement.
<b>Housing</b>	Percent living on campus in freshman year and in later years.
	On-campus housing mandatory for freshman year?
	On-campus housing guaranteed for freshman year? ...4 years?
	Large dorms / housing clusters / houses.
	Availability of single rooms / doubles / suites / apartments.
	Roommate selection (and change) process.
	Coed buildings? Coed floors? Coed rooms? Coed bathrooms?
	Housing quality, quantity, location, and proximity to classes.
	On-line computer access from residence halls?
<b>Dining</b>	Centralized / decentralized dining.
	Dining plan options. Fast food places in dining plan?
	Where can I eat on Sundays?
	Alternative food sources on or near campus?
<b>Campus Activities</b>	Prominent campus organizations.
	Social life.
	Greek system.
	Religious, ethnic, or cultural groups.
	Community service opportunities or requirements.
	Opportunities to participate in or attend:
	intramural athletics, leisure recreation, cultural events, fine arts.
	Organized indoor and outdoor recreation activities.

## **Campus and Student Life:**

Application	Application fee.
Requirements	Informational / biographical forms for admission.
	Forms for honors.
	Forms for housing.
	Forms for financial aid.

	Forms for specific grants and scholarships. High school transcript and secondary school report. Essays and other personal information. Recommendations. Interview.
Tests	SAT, SAT Subject Tests (which subjects), ACT.
Deadlines	Application deadlines for admission, housing, financial aid, programs. Notification dates.
Admission selectivity	Percent of applicants offered admission (lower = more selective) Average SAT scores and GPA of freshman class. Freshman class profile.

### **Costs and Financial Aid:**

<b>Costs</b>	Student budget for tuition and fees. Room and board, books, personal expenses. Travel costs.
<b>Awards</b>	Percent of students receiving financial aid/scholarships based on need. Percent of students receiving financial aid/scholarships based on merit. Range of award amounts. Loan expectations. Student job expectations. Other financing options.
<b>Application</b>	Federal / state / institution forms required. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) CSS (College Scholarship Service) Financial Aid PROFILE

### **Different Deadlines for each.**

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“What to look for in a College.” Make copies. Take one on college visits.

<b>Enrollment</b>	Core curriculum	Direct link to grad program?
Total no. undergrad	Major requirements	% in major going to grad schools
No. grads	<b>Courses Offered</b>	Accreditation & rep of prof program
<b>Retention</b>	Breadth & depth of courses in major	<b>Career Aids</b>
% freshmen return soph year	Quality & rep in major	Advising & info
% who grad	Interdisciplinary courses. Strongest dept.	Job placement program
% who grad w/in 4 years	<b>Independent Study</b>	On-campus recruiting. Employment rate
<b>Students like Me</b>	Individual tutorials	& salaries on graduation
Highly selective?	Seminars	<b>Facilities</b>
% commuters vs. residents. Regional diversity.	Opportunities for research. Undergrads assist signif. research?	Quality of main library
Coed or single sex.	<b>Special Program</b>	No. of books, periodicals
Male/female ratio.	International programs. Internships	Library in my major
Ethnic diversity.	Co-op work-study, fieldwork	Academic buildings, labs, & classrooms
% w/ need-based fin'l aid..	Joint degree programs	Computer facilities
<b>Location</b>	Double majors, minors, etc. Combined undergrad-grad program	Athletic facilities
Region	Pre-professional programs	Recreational facilities
Distance from home	<b>Standards</b>	Student life center
Travel cost & convenience. Economy & industry (jobs) in area	Accreditations of college	Appearance, age, & maintenance
<b>Setting</b>	Accreditations of majors	Transportation around campus. Security & campus crime stats
Climate: # outdoor days	Degree requirements	<b>Type of Students</b>
long & cold winter?	Grading system	Diversity / homogeneity. Tolerance of differences. Geographic diversity vs. regional. Selectivity (SAT & GPA ranges)
Urban / suburban / rural	Honor system	Campus Community
Nearest city / nearest countryside.	<b>Faculty</b>	Campus issues
Recreation opportunities	Faculty fully staffed?	Liberal / directive / restrictive society
Cultural opportunities Appearance, age of community. Crime stats of area	Classes available?	Competitiveness
<b>Type</b>	% PhD's	Student involvement
Public or private	No. of Nobel laureates, etc. Research or teaching	<b>Housing</b>
College or university	Faculty course load each semester. No. of core courses taught by grad TA's	% living on campus housing mandatory, guaranteed 1st year? Housing types
Liberal Arts / Pre-prof (___) /Science / Tech	<b>Faculty-Student</b>	Single rooms / doubles / suites / apts
Degrees offered	Faculty/student ratio	Roommate selection process
Grad degrees in my field? Internships, research, student work in major	Class sizes in freshman & later Opportunity for discussion classes	Coed buildings? -floors? -rooms? -baths
<b>Philosophy</b>	Faculty advising system?	Housing quality, quantity, proximity to class
Traditional or experimental. Deeply scholarly or career focus. Heritage & special traditions?	Office hours / week	On-line computer access in residence
<b>Calendar</b>	Faculty involvement	<b>Dining</b>
Semester, trimester, quarter. Acceleration	<b>Academic Demands</b>	Centralized / decentralized
AP full credit #_-Placement exams	Workload, course expectations. Types of assignments	Plan options. Fast food in plan? Where on Sundays
<b>Overall General Reputation</b>	Academic pressure or competition	Alternative food on or near campus
Value (quality v. cost)	<b>Intellectual Vitality</b>	<b>Campus Activities</b>
Alumni accomplishments. Parents' preference. Recruiter's attitude. Likes – dislikes.	Student attitudes toward learning	Campus orgs. Social life. Greek. Religious, ethnic, or cultural groups
<b>Academic Requirement</b>	Interest in politics, social, world issues	Community service opportunities.
Required freshman courses	Community service opportunities	Athletics, leisure, cultural, fine arts
	<b>Career Preparation</b>	Organized in- & outdoor recreation
	Pre-professional programs	

# COLLEGE ADMISSION HANDBOOK

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# COLLEGE CAMPUS VISITS

## **Your Objectives In Visiting College Campuses:**

- Get a firsthand impression of the students, faculty, facilities, and programs;
- Get a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere;
- Meet with administration to learn what they expect from applicants;
- See the facilities used for study, living, and recreation;
- Get a sense of the surrounding community.
- Discover what sets the school apart from similar institutions.

## **When To Visit:**

Most admissions offices are open year round, but the only good time to visit a college campus is when its classes are in session. During class times you are assured of the opportunity to talk with students and faculty and you will have a better feeling for the atmosphere of the community.

If you visit in the summer, plan to make a return visit to your top choices. Mardi Gras break of your junior year is a good time to plan visits to several schools. Some students will apply to schools, wait to see where they have been admitted, and then make return visits during April of their senior year to help with their final decisions.

Organized Visitation Days:

Many colleges host special visitation days throughout the year. These programs let you meet and talk with many different members of the college community within a short time. The program may include an overnight in a residence hall and attending classes. Check the college files or call the colleges' admissions offices to ask about future dates for Junior Days and Senior Days. Many dates are published in our weekly Counselors' Bulletin.

## **Before Your Visit:**

Contact the school at least two weeks in advance to schedule your visit. Inform the college of your areas of interest, both academic and extracurricular. They may then be able to plan a more meaningful visit for you. The admissions office can arrange for you to talk with an admissions counselor, either in an individual interview or a group information session. (Ask if an individual interview is a required part of the admissions process.) All colleges offer guided campus tours, usually daily, and many can help you set up housing, classes, and appointments with faculty, department heads, coaches, and activities leaders.

Spend as much time on the campus as you can - at least half a day. A thorough, well-planned visit may take a day and a half.

Make sure you have good directions to the admissions office and to the right parking lot. And keep the admissions office phone number with you.

## **What You Should Plan To Do:**

When setting up your visit arrange to do as many of these things as you can:

Talk with an admissions counselor.

Take the official campus tour

Attend classes, preferably a freshman level class and an upper level class. (The admissions office should have a list of classes to visit.)

Meet with a professor in the academic areas that interest you.

Eat a meal in the campus dining facility.

Speak with coaches or advisors of the extracurricular activities that interest you.

Spend the night in a residence hall.

Read the catalogs and brochures from each college you plan to visit. While reading, compile a list of questions that are important to you.

Check with Franklin's counselors or ask the college to get a list of the names of current students who may have graduated from Franklin or who live in New Orleans. Contact them before your visit.

Ask for the names of faculty members in your area of interest and try in advance to schedule appointments with them.

Buy a journal to keep impressions from your trips to all of the schools on you visit, and to write down the names of the people you meet.

### **The Visit:**

Admissions offices run on a schedule, so it is important to be on time. If you may be running late or must postpone your visit, call the admissions office and let them know.

During your visit talk with the admissions staff, several dozen students, and a few faculty members. Pick up a campus newspaper. Investigate the library, the snack bar, and the student activities center. Attend an athletic or arts event.

And do wander through hallways looking at bulletin boards in both the classroom areas and the faculty and staff office areas of the academic department that interests you. Find out what notices the faculty have on their office doors. Are there hands-on, off-campus projects going on with faculty and students?

A thorough campus visit should let you discover what sets the school apart from similar institutions.

### **The Individual Interview:**

You should know in advance whether an individual interview is a required part of the admissions process that will be used evaluatively. At some colleges it is. At others the interview is used simply to learn more about you, and mostly for you to ask questions and learn about the school. Any interview will allow each party to evaluate the other. Verify the admissions requirements (tests and high school requirements) and discuss your chances for

success. Resolve any questions about college costs and ask about financial aid opportunities, including merit based scholarships. Make sure you have all the forms required for each and double-check the deadlines.

### **Interview Tips:**

Be on time. (Know where you are going and how long it will take to travel.) Relax and be yourself.

Deliberately make eye contact and speak clearly.

Have a list of questions that deal with your particular needs, not the questions you could find in the catalog. Be sure to mention anything about your background or achievements that you feel the admissions office needs to know.

### **Sample Interview Questions**

The goal of your visits to college campuses is to answer and ask questions. Before your visit be prepared to answer the questions you may be asked and to ask the questions important to you.

Interviewers need to learn about you. Expect them to ask you questions from the following categories:

#### **Awareness**

##### **Self**

What are your strengths and your weaknesses?

What would you change about yourself?

What adjectives would your friends use to describe you?

Why do you think you were chosen or elected for \_\_\_position?

If I visit Franklin, what will I find as your role in the school community?

What sets you apart as an individual at Benjamin Franklin?

What pressures do you feel operating on you in society to conform?

Describe ways in which you and your friends “go your own way”.

##### **Your School**

Describe the student population at Franklin?

If you were principal for a day, what would you change about Franklin?

What are the hot issues at Franklin?

##### **Community**

Describe your community.

Have you been involved in special events or programs that impacted your community?

##### **College**

Where are you in your college selection process?

What type of college or university are you looking for?

How did you become interested in \_\_\_College/University?

##### **Global**

What social issues concern you the most?

If you were President of the U.S., what social policy would you address?

Questions which relate to current world events.

##### **Diversity and Depth of Interest**

Describe your extracurricular activities?

Which activity means the most to you?

How did you become involved in \_\_\_\_\_?  
What are your most meaningful accomplishments?  
Which activities do you plan to continue in college?  
Are there activities that you have not been able to pursue in high school?  
Have you held leadership positions in your activities?

#### Level of Intellectual Depth and Development

What high school courses have you liked most?  
What academic accomplishments have been the most rewarding to you?  
Who is your favorite author?  
Describe a book that you've read recently and enjoyed.  
What courses are you excited about taking in college?  
Have you been involved in academic experiences outside of school?  
Do you know what you might want to major in?

#### Quality and Creativity

What do you do in your spare time?  
What is the greatest challenge or obstacle that you have overcome?  
How do you define success?  
If you could spend a day with anyone living or dead, who? and why?  
If you could take a year off before going to college and were given \$50,000, what would you do with your time and money during that year?  
What kind of development would you like to see in yourself over your four years in college?  
Where do you see yourself in ten years?

## **The Group Information Session:**

Many schools will invite you to a group information session which may include a formal college overview presentation from an admissions officer, including details of admissions and financial aid processes. There will also be a time for you to ask specific questions.

A group information session can be as personal as an individual conversation with the staff if you join in, prepared with your own questions, when the counselor asks for questions for questions from the group. You may also want to introduce yourself to the admissions officer after the session.

A group session may even be more helpful if members of the group ask important questions that you had not thought of. If a college does not require an evaluative individual interview, then you are not at any disadvantage in attending only a group information session.

### **Questions To Ask In Interviews And Group Sessions**

- During individual interviews and group sessions most admission officers will give you a chance to ask questions. It is important to have some questions in mind to ask. The admission officer's answers to one question may generate other questions.
- As you formulate questions think about what you have read or heard from others about a particular institution. Any question that you have is a valid one!

- What academic programs are most popular ?
- I'm interested in [academic area], what does your school offer in that area?
- Are classes taught by full professors or do you have teaching assistants?
- What is your largest class? What is your average class size?
- Are most classes structured as lectures or discussions?
- How would you describe the relationship between faculty and students?
- Do faculty keep regular office hours for students to stop in and talk?
- Describe social life on campus. What do students do for fun?
- I'm interested in studying abroad during college. What options do you offer?
- I've heard that your \_\_\_\_ program/activity/department is particularly strong,
- If you could change something about the college, what would it be?
- Do you have an honor code? If so, does it truly work?
- What is your retention rate?
- How is security on the campus? In the community?
- Describe the residence hall set-up.
- Describe the nature of support for students.
- How is ABC College distinctive from other schools of its size and caliber?
- What was your acceptance rate last year? Give a profile of the freshman class.
- When you read an application, what are the top five things you are looking for?
- Describe the process of applying for need-based or merit based scholarships.

### **The Campus Tour:**

Student surveys show that the campus tour is the most important, most memorable aspect of a college campus visit. The tour is your chance to see what it means to be a student at the college you are visiting. Usually a current student will guide you on a walk through the campus and through many of its buildings. You should be prepared to ask the student specific questions about his experience - not questions about admission.

Also keep in mind that the student guide's experiences and impressions are just one person's experience. The school should not be judged solely on your experience with your tour guide. Ask the guide about his major area and his career plans. Make an assessment of the guide's validity for your own purposes.

### **Visiting Classes:**

It is important to visit an entry level course for freshmen and an upper level course. Visiting class can give you an impression of the structure and size of the classroom experience at a particular college. You can also witness the level of student/faculty interaction in the classroom. Ask the admissions office if they have a list of available classes and then choose classes in your area of interest.

### **Meet With Your Academic Department Head or Faculty Members**

Either in a separate interview with a faculty member, or right after attending a class, briefly describe your academic experience and what leads you to the field of study. Ask if your high

school work is sufficient preparation for success at the college. (Of course it is, but how psychologically clever of you to make the faculty member have to start off saying "yes".) How is this college distinct from similar colleges?

The department head will be glad to tell you in detail the opportunities you will have there. Be sure to ask about the placement record for graduates in your field of study.

Ask about internships and whether undergraduates get to participate in graduate level or ground-breaking, significant research.

### **Study Bulletin Boards:**

Bulletin boards are an important means of communication for a college campus. Learn about events that are taking place, the issues being discussed, and all the campus opportunities by wandering through academic and student life buildings and reading bulletin boards. And don't overlook the faculty office areas - that is where students sign up for the more important academic and professional activities beyond the classroom. You can also learn a lot about the faculty by reading what is posted on their office doors.

### **Visit With Other Members Of The College Community:**

Review the list of activities that you wish to continue and new areas that you wish to explore when you go to college. Talking with the person directly involved with each activity is a better source of information than the admissions staff. Ask to set up interviews with the people who oversee the activities you are interested in. For example, if you want to play a varsity or intramural sport, it may be important to talk with a coach. If you want to study abroad, ask to meet the director of the international studies program.

If possible do the scheduling before you arrive on campus. And if you cannot meet the activity directors during your visit, get their names and phone numbers from the admissions office and contact them at another time.

Be absolutely sure you send a thank you note to each activity representative you speak with and ask them to send a brief note to the admissions committee suggesting you for admission. Remember - the admissions committee wants a well rounded student body and it is the activities directors who signal the college's needs to the admissions committee. It pays to either be bold or act bold here.

### **Talk To Students:**

Throughout your visit talk to as many current students as possible. You can meet students by going to class and by spending the night, but you should also approach students you see on campus. - "Hi, I'm visiting from New Orleans, applying for admission. Do you mind if I ask you about [college]?"

Ask how much study time is necessary for success, how the food is in the dining hall, and what campus life is like and what social and recreation activities are available well attended.

### **Questions to Ask Current Students**

- Why did you choose \_\_\_\_ College?

- What would you change about the college?
- What would you fight to keep unchanged about the college?
- What do you think makes \_\_\_\_\_ College distinctive?
- What are the major campus issues?
- Does the honor code really work?
- Have you been challenged in your course work?
- Do you have close relationships with your faculty members? Give examples.
- How large were your classes freshman year? How large now?
- What do students do for fun?
- Is this a suitcase school?
- How effective is the faculty advising system?
- How is the relationship between the students and the surrounding community?
- A Night In A Residence Hall:
  - Spending a night in a residence hall is a crucial part of your visit. It is one of the best ways to have a firsthand encounter with student life and the opportunities available outside the classroom. You may have a friend at the school you can stay with, or admissions may be able to schedule an overnight for you with one of the student hosts, though that is more often only available for seniors.
  - You will probably sleep on the floor, so bring a pillow and sleeping bag. When you schedule your visit, ask if you need to bring anything else.

### **Eat A Meal:**

Your nutrition and sustenance will be important throughout your four years of college. So you should explore the dining facilities during your visit. Eat a meal in the dining hall and a snack in the student union. Dining facilities are good places to talk casually with a variety of current students.

### **Attend A Special Event:**

If there are athletic events, concerts, theater performances or speakers taking place while you are on campus, choose as many as you can possibly go to.

Give the college every chance to show you what makes it the best school for you.

### **After The Visit**

You will probably visit several schools on your trip and it is easy for your impressions to run together. Once you have left a school, while your thoughts are still fresh, write down your impressions. Be sure to note what you liked and what you disliked.

If you think of questions that you did not ask, do contact the people that you met.

Write thank you notes to those with whom you had appointments - but why stop with thanks? Be bold: If you talked with coaches, faculty, or administrators, politely ask them to send a note to the admissions committee. Use your full name, SSN, etc.

Thank and compliment student hosts if you stayed overnight, too. (Admissions people will probably ask them their opinion and their sense of your feelings about the college.)

If the school gives you a campus visit evaluation form, take time to fill it out. Your thoughts and suggestions are important to the admission office and may help future visitors have productive, positive visits.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself**

- How does the campus “feel” to you? What are your initial reactions?
- What is the weather like?
- What is the general atmosphere on campus? Serious? Party? a good balance?
- Do students take pride in their campus? Is it clean and well kept?
- Are the facilities adequate in your area of interest?
- Is laboratory equipment up to date? Is use of labs limited or encouraged?
- Do students seem to be using the library? Is it an inviting place where you would like to spend some time? Are the stacks open to students?
- Are computers available for student use on campus? computer labs in residence halls? Student union? Connections in student’s room?
- Are freshmen guaranteed housing? What are residence halls like? Rooms or suites?
- Single sex or coed? If coed - by room, hall, floor? Do you have a choice?
- Are dining facilities convenient? Is the food good?
- Are students required to buy meal contracts?
- Are there good athletic facilities available for all students? Intercollegiate sports? Intramural sports?
- Is there a Greek system? What impact do fraternities /sororities have on student life? What percent of students participate?
- Are there religious organizations available to suit your needs?
- Are cultural opportunities available? On campus? In the community? Do students participate in the events?
- Is there a pharmacy, coffee house, restaurant or grocery near the campus?
- Is a car an asset or a liability on this campus?
- Is the campus accessible by bus, plane or train? Where is the nearest terminal?
- Are campus jobs available for all students?
- Are there incidental expenses beyond tuition, room and board that I should expect?



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# FIND THE BEST COLLEGE FOR YOU

## CHOOSE THE COLLEGES FOR YOUR SHORT LIST

### Narrow Your College List

In the fall of your senior year it is important to narrow your list of college choices and choose the schools you will apply to. If you have done good research, talked frequently with your counselors and your parents, asked yourself tough questions, and made campus visits, the final process of narrowing your list should be fairly easy.

#### **How many applications to submit?**

We strongly urge that you send no more than 5 or 6 applications. However, it is important that you have a range of schools including:

Do your own test scores and academic performance fall above their medians?

- **A SAFETY SCHOOL**

Among the schools you are applying to be certain that you have a safety school. Examine the raw statistics of median SAT scores and median GPA's in the profile of the entering freshman class (in The College Board's The College Handbook).

- **A TARGET SCHOOL**

A school where you have well above a 50% chance of being admitted. While your safety school may not be your first choice, it needs to be a school that you would be happy attending. It should offer everything that your dream school offers and be one that you can afford to attend. This is the hardest school to select.

Choose a couple of schools for which your SAT scores and GPA closely match the median scores and GPA of the freshman class profile. You have a 50/50 chance of being admitted. While your statistics match the school's statistics and your chances for admittance are good, realize that each applicant pool is different and schools may become more or less selective in a given year. Also remember that admissions officers will look beyond your numbers as they shape their first year class.

- **A REACH SCHOOL.**

You may have liked a school for which your SAT scores and GPA fall below the median numbers for their entering class. Although you may have less than a 50% chance of being admitted, it is all right to set high goals and apply to a reach or dream school. If you approach it realistically and do not have your heart set, you can rejoice if you are admitted, but will not feel devastated if you are not admitted.

**Ask yourself questions. Answer them honestly. Don't kid yourself.**

Review the criteria you set earlier in this handbook. Have serious discussions with your parents about college costs and financing methods. Be realistic. Set your academic criteria so that your college choice is not based solely on the cost. There are many options within various cost ranges.

Talk frequently with your counselor, who will make many suggestions.  
Write early for information about each college on your list.

Talk with people who may have had experience with one or more of the schools on your list: faculty, friends, family, Franklin alumni currently attending colleges.

Meet with college representatives as they come to Franklin or hold gatherings in the area. Attend College Night.

Visit one or more colleges on your list. Remember that you can get an idea of size and type by visiting campuses in or near the New Orleans area.

### **Determine whether you meet their criteria.**

Have you demonstrated that you can do the kind of academic work each college demands of its students? The counselors will be able to give you the benefit of their experience with specific schools.

Although test results are only one factor in the selection process, they do count! Are your scores within the range presented by most successful candidates to a particular college? If not, are you being realistic?

Do you have a special talent or interest that will supplement a solid academic record to enhance your candidacy? Do you play a musical instrument? Have special athletic talents? Involved in community service? Held a job during high school?

## **THE COLLEGE'S ADMISSION DECISION**

A well-done and thoughtfully presented application is crucial. Admission officers can tell when a student has spent time on the application. This sends a signal that the student is truly interested in their college. Although colleges may vary in how they review applications for admission, the following criteria will be essential in their decisions.

### **1. The rigor of the high school curriculum**

Colleges will look closely at the courses you have chosen in your four years of high school. They want to see you challenging yourself, which means taking advantage of Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses. Most colleges will want you to take 4-5 solid academic courses each year, including English, social science, natural and physical science, math, and more than two years of a foreign language.

Admission officers pay attention to the courses you choose to take as a senior. They may interpret a weak senior schedule as a lack of motivation, so continue to work hard in your senior year.

## 2. Performance in high school

Admission officers will pay close attention to the actual grades you have made in your course work throughout your four years in high school. They will notice both upward and downward trends in your grades, as well as consistent performance. In some cases a college may recalculate your GPA based solely on your academic course work. The combination of the rigor of your curriculum and your performance in course work is one of the best predictors of how well you will succeed in college course work.

## 3. Writing sample

Most colleges will require that you submit at least one essay as a part of the application. The essays will be examined closely to see if you have solid technical writing skills. In addition, they will look closely at content to learn something about you that has not been revealed in other parts of your application. So spend time and thought on your college admission essays. It is the one part of applying to college that you have total control over, and a well written essay can make a difference in your application.

There is no magic length for college essays. If no length is specified in the instructions, essays need not be more than two pages.

### **Sample Essay Questions:**

Help us to know you better.

Describe your own personal philosophy of leadership.

Describe the social issue of greatest concern to you.

If you could spend an evening with an historical figure, who would that be? Why?

What person has had the greatest effect on your life?

Please describe an intellectual experience that has engaged or challenged you.

Pose the question you wish we had asked and then give your answer.

## 4. Your standardized test scores

Most colleges will require that you submit either the SAT or the ACT. In some cases you may have to submit SAT Subject Tests scores. Check the exact standardized test requirements of each college you might apply to.

Standardized test scores give admission officers a standard by which you can be compared with students from very different high schools. But remember that scores do not give data on motivation, self-discipline, concern for others, sense of humor, and all those qualities of mind and heart that are extremely important when a college is selecting a first year class.

## 5. Your contributions to your home, school and community

Most colleges will ask that you list the activities and special programs in which you have been involved, and the jobs you have held. They are usually looking beyond the breadth of your activity to determine the depth of commitment that you have to your activities. It is much more important to be committed and involved, serving as

a leader and receiving recognition in activities, than to simply join numerous activities and approach them in a half-hearted manner.

In addition, admission officers will closely examine your recommendations from teachers and others who know you well to gain further insights on how you have made an impact both inside and outside the classroom.

#### 6. What you bring to the college

Colleges are not looking for well-rounded students; they want a well-rounded student body. Your areas of interest and expertise will be a part of that. You should proudly list your accomplishments and passions, no matter how unconventional.

This is not boasting, it is giving the colleges what they need.

The impact you may have on an area of the college, be it in athletics (and not just the varsity sports), the arts, journalism, debate, community service, or other activity is central to the admissions decision.

#### 7. Other admission selection criteria

The following things may also be considered when an admission decision is made:

Family ties to the college/university,

Early Decision or Regular Decision: your degree of expressed interest,

Whether or not your application met the deadline,

The overall appearance of the complete application.

## DECISION PLANS

### REGULAR PLAN

Each college sets a single deadline for all applications.

Common deadlines seen are January 1 and 15, February 1 and 15, March 1. The schools notify you by April 15.

Under regular plan admission you must respond to offers by May 1.

### EARLY DECISION

Apply by the end of October, generally. Check your college's ED deadline. You sign a binding commitment on the Early Decision application. If the college offers admission, you are obligated to accept and to pay the deposit, usually within two weeks, AND to withdraw all other applications.

**Advantages:** The College gives you a closer look in a much smaller applicant pool.

You are sending a message of commitment to the school. If deferred, your application will be looked at again in the spring with the regular applicant pool.

Additional letters and essays can be submitted and corrective action taken.

Meanwhile you apply to additional schools.

**Disadvantages:** You can't change your mind. You sometimes get less financial aid, since the school knows you are committed to the college regardless of their offer.

You need a solid, early understanding of the college. The percentage of a college class chosen from Early Decision applicants ranges from 15% to over 30% among schools. Highest percentages occur at most selective schools and recent trends there are sharply upward.

### EARLY ACTION

Usually apply by Nov. 1, though deadlines vary by college. (You may apply elsewhere at the same time or later.) You stand on your record achieved through

the junior year. The school notifies you of its decision by mid-December, but you are not bound to accept. You do not have to notify the school until the Common Reply Date, May 1. Early Action is offered by quite a few colleges: Brown, Harvard, Notre Dame, Tulane.

### **ROLLING ADMISSION**

The college reads, processes, and notifies students continuously as applications arrive. Admission closes when the desired size of a class is achieved (that is, when the number of offers of admission has been sent, usually 3 - 4 times the desired class size). At colleges that use rolling admission it is to your advantage to apply as early as possible. Rolling admission is seen most at state universities.

### **EARLY ADMISSION**

Apply in your junior year for admission to college before finishing high school. At most colleges Early Admission is reserved for truly exceptional students whose academic preparation and achievement level are sufficient for early entrance to college.

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# THE APPLICATION PROCESS

## COMPLETE EACH OF THESE STEPS:

- I Mark your calendar with application deadlines for each college, transcript request deadlines, scholarship deadlines, schedule of visits by college representatives, College Night, and interview appointments.
  
- II Seniors must write a self-evaluation to be used by the counselors when they write the school report which is sent to each college with the transcript. Any explanation of a drop in grades on the transcript (illness, circumstances at home, etc.) that you wish the counselors to address may be included with the self-evaluation. Let the counselors know your hopes and dreams, your first choice college if you have one, special interests, and responsibilities at home or in the community.

Deadline for self-evaluations to be turned in to the Counselors' Office is Registration day of your senior year. These must be turned in before you make any transcript requests. Make a copy of your self-evaluation and keep it in your college pocket folder.
  
- III Peer recommendations are also very helpful to the counselors in writing a well balanced recommendation for you. Ask a friend (a Franklin student or someone you know from the community) to write a letter of recommendation for you. This is informal: how do they know you, what are you like as a friend, what are your strengths and weaknesses - how would they like to have you as a roommate or friend at college? It should be a letter from the heart. It does not need to be long. It may be hand written as long as it is legible. This is also due on Registration day of your senior year
  
- IV Parents of seniors must write a letter of recommendation for you, their students. Parents' letters will help the counselors in writing the school recommendation to colleges. How do you see your child as a student? What are your hopes and dreams for him/her? Cover accomplishments, service activities, or home responsibilities of which the counselors are unaware. A letter from the parent is very helpful in presenting a well-rounded picture for each student. Please send letters to the Counselors' Office on Registration day of your senior year
  
- V An Activity Sheet is due in the Counselors' Office also on Registration day of your senior year. This must be typed, since it will go with your official transcript. List activities that you have participated in during grades 9-12, including ones that you plan to participate in during senior year. Junior Achievement can be listed if you take Free Enterprise at Benjamin Franklin. Travel and hobbies may be lifelong. Be honest, but inclusive!

- VI** Know which tests each college requires. Register for the tests on time and request that your scores be sent to each college. When you register for any SAT, fill out the Student Descriptive Questionnaire. You will receive information from a variety of colleges and scholarship programs. Note that some colleges require three SAT Subject Tests; some require specific tests. Review the schedule of test dates.
- VII** Obtain college application forms early in the senior year. Get the paper copy for reference, even if you plan to apply on college application websites like **The Universal Application**, <http://www.universalcollegeapp.com> / OR **The Common Application**, <http://www.commonapp.org> . More than 400 colleges and universities accept the Common Application as their application.
- VIII** Allow yourself sufficient time to prepare carefully written, thoughtful, and neat applications. Do not rush -- do not wait until the last minute. Check your spelling. Answer every question. Type your application (use Apply '99 or similar program when appropriate), and always type your essays. Have someone proofread everything.
- Keep in mind the importance of the essay.** You are presenting yourself. At a time when the selective colleges have the most competitive applicant pools in history, writing a strong essay becomes more important to set you apart from other applicants. The essay gives you an opportunity to present ideas and, most importantly, to give a sense of yourself to the admissions committee. Teachers of Franklin's senior English courses will discuss essay writing in class. If asked, counselors or teachers will read student essays and make suggestions. Books about writing essays are available in the College Resource Room. Write a rough draft early. Put it aside for a few days. Reread. Rewrite.
- IX** Turn in transcript requests to your counselor by the deadlines listed in the calendar in this handbook. Do not wait until the deadline! Fill out a Transcript Request form from the Counselors' Office. Give name and complete mailing address of the college you are applying to, along with application due date for each transcript to your counselor. The checklist on the Transcript Request form must be completed before the request will be accepted. **Fee is \$5.00 per transcript.** (There is no charge for transcripts for scholarships.)
- X** If a college has a **Mid-Year Report** form in the application, or if you wish fall semester senior grades to be sent to colleges, bring stamped envelopes pre-addressed to the college to the Counselors' Office by February 1. Please print your name on the back of the envelope.
- XI** **Give recommendation forms to your teachers.** Ask the teachers who know you well and have taught you during your junior or senior year to write a recommendation for you. Provide the forms with your name filled in and a stamped, pre-addressed envelope for each college to which you wish them to send a

recommendation. Indicate in writing the application due date. (Get all this to the teachers by the teachers' deadlines.) Remember that the same teachers can write recommendation letters for all of your colleges. The initial writing is the time consuming part. They may adapt these to individual colleges or write one letter that is appropriate for all. Employers, community members, athletic coaches or club sponsors may send additional recommendations. All recommendations should come from people who know you well. Recommendations that are vague or general may weaken your application.

**XII** An application deadline usually means the application must be in the college's admissions office by that date. Some colleges specify postmark deadlines, though.

Keep photocopies of all applications. It is extremely important for you to keep a file containing photocopies of all applications, essays, activity sheet, and financial aid forms. Occasionally materials are lost in the mail or misfiled by a college admission office.

Keep the Counselors' Office up-to-date on your applications. If you decide not to complete an application after having turned in a Transcript Request, let us know. You will save us a great deal of work and yourself some embarrassment.

Let us know each time you receive notice of action taken on one of your applications. Not all colleges send copies to the high school.

## **Who sends what:**

YOU, the student are responsible for sending:

- Applications (including admission, honors, financial aid, housing, etc.)
- Application fees
- Official test scores (if college was not listed on test registration form)
- PROFILE and/or FAFSA forms (financial aid forms)

COUNSELORS' OFFICE is responsible for sending:

- Official transcript
- Profile of Benjamin Franklin High School
- School/counselor recommendation
- Student's Activity Sheet – if well-done

TEACHER is responsible for sending:

- Teacher recommendation

## Sample Activity Sheet

Full Name

Address

City, State, ZIP

Email address

Date of Birth: XX/XX/XXXX

Activity year	Grades	Hours/Week	Weeks per
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i.e. Charity Horse-shoeing	7-12	6hrs/wk	13 wks
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School

Sports

Community

Employment

Awards

Travel

Hobbies & Special Interests

**Or you may use a résumé format.**

# ESSAYS FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

## **Why essays are important:**

Your essay brings you to life, filling in the personality behind the test scores and grades. Your essay makes your personal impression - especially important if you were not able to interview. It can show how you are different from other applicants with the same scores and qualifications.

An admission officer said, "Your essay is less important than the SAT and GPA, but it is sometimes the most decisive document in the application. It can make a student with average credentials stand out in the applicant pool."

## **What are they looking for?**

A snapshot of how you think when you are engaged with an idea or an experience the answer to: "What has this 17-year-old learned from life, given his/her opportunities? an honest, true-to-self, uncontrived statement

## **Who are the readers?** The harsh life of an admission officer in winter:

20 - 25 folders to be read every day: At a brisk 15 minutes each that is almost a full day. At a more thoughtful 20 - 30 minutes per application he will be at it till late at night. If yours is the one he selects at 10:30PM., it had better be good! Good admission people try to come to each folder fresh, as if it were the first. You will get fair treatment, but beware of the context. You are one of many.

## **How to write your essays:**

How long should it be? As long as they say in the instructions - give or take. If no length is stated, then two pages typed, double-spaced will do.

**Should I do it if it says optional?** Yes, yes, yes. You should do it.

## **What topic should I use if it is left up to me?**

Something that is important and meaningful to you will seem meaningful to the reader. Ask yourself what is the one thing I am enthusiastic about? Share your answer in a way that makes the reader feel your enthusiasm.

## **Good things to have in an essay:**

**A sense of immediacy.** "I went to Latin America last summer" vs. "As I stepped off the bus into the wet heat of the small town, I thought to myself, 'What have I done?'" In other words: Don't distance yourself from the reader.

**Specifics.** Be as precise as you can be, especially in response to the common question "Why do you want to come to our school?" Don't just say you like kids, say why you like them or what you like about them.

**Honesty.** Let your essay come from your heart. Write it for yourself first. Treat it as a journal entry, perhaps.

## **Don'ts:**

Don't repeat what is said elsewhere in your application.

If you list activities in your application, for instance, don't list them again in your essay.

Write about why you are involved in them.

Don't wait until the night before the essay must be sent to write your essay.

If you didn't care, why should the overworked reader care?

Don't write academic essays unless you are asked for one.

Don't leave the reader with unanswered questions.

Don't be overly formal in tone.

Don't write poetry.

Don't rely on a gimmick instead of doing the work.

## **How do I start?**

Brainstorm.

Focus on a topic and dig deep.

Draft in a conversational tone.

Read it aloud.

Let someone else critique it.

Revise, but don't lose your personal style.

**Proof. It should be perfect, free of typos and errors.**



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# FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

## Helpful Hints and Practical Ideas

The process of applying for admission, scholarships, need-based aid, and loans can be complex and confusing. Take advantage of the financial aid staff at the colleges you are considering. Let them and your high school counselors help you through the web of forms, policies, and procedures. If you don't understand something, ask questions. It's important to read the fine print!

## TIPS AND POINTERS

- Do not assume that because your neighbor does not qualify for need-based aid that you won't either. And if your income is above a certain arbitrary level, don't assume you won't be eligible. Factors other than income are important in need analysis. Each family's situation is unique and must be considered individually. And remember that the information you submit is treated confidentially.
- If a college subscribes to the National Candidate Reply Day of May 1, you have until then to notify the college of your intent to accept or decline its offer of admission, scholarships, and financial aid.
- Policies, deadlines, and requirements for admission, scholarships, and financial aid differ from school to school, and even within schools. Be sure to observe them.
- In particular be sure to **comply with deadlines** for admissions applications, financial aid applications, and scholarship applications. Schools with limited resources may not be able to meet the financial needs of students who apply late.
- Carefully follow instructions for completing forms.
- Use accurate information. Avoid having to submit correction documents later. It is time-consuming and can cause delays in consideration of your aid application. Your federal tax returns are your best financial references for completing need-based financial aid applications.
- Keep a copy of everything you submit to any school or agency. This includes applications for admission, aid, loans, and scholarships, as well as all the letters, essays, and grade reports.

Remember that financial need varies with college costs, and that financial aid packages will vary from college to college as well. When you compare need-based aid packages, be sure you are considering all costs of attending a particular institution and are comparing the types of aid offered in the aid package, not just the total amount of aid or scholarships offered.

Borrowing money, in moderation, is a viable means of financing a college education. It is economically justified to borrow for investment expenditures - a house, for instance. A college education is also an investment. Its benefits are enjoyed long after the consumption of the formal education ends. Just as you would spread out the costs of a house over a number of years, it is reasonable to spread out the payment of education costs over a number of years.

Examine personal resources and expenses. There may be relatively painless ways to cut expenses and free up more money for college costs.

Eligibility for need-based aid is not set in stone from year to year. If family circumstances change, as when a parent loses a job or becomes seriously ill, additional help may be available. Ask! If you receive need-based aid, you will have to reapply for assistance each year. Certain scholarship also may require you to reapply annually.

At most schools the self-help portion of a student's need-based aid package (job and loan) will increase from one year to the next.

## THINK ABOUT ANTICIPATED EXPENSES OF APPLYING TO COLLEGE

(2010-2011 fees – they will go up!)

Standardized Tests: Test / Registration Fee / Additional Report Fee

SAT / \$47.00/ after first 4 free reports. Additional score reports cost extra \$10 each – late registration fee an additional \$24, to test standby is additional \$41.

SAT Subject Tests / \$21.00 / plus \$21 for language listening -- \$10 for other subjects for each test taken

ACT Plus Writing / \$48.00 – Additional score reports cost extra \$10 each – late registration fee an additional \$21, to test standby is additional \$41.

Advanced Placement / \$87.00 each

Application fees at colleges: \$20 - \$85 each. There may be a reduced fee for applying on-line.

Photocopies for each completed application page: \$0.10 per page

Ben Franklin High School Transcript fees: \$5.00 per college

Certified mail, return receipt fees for each application Stamped addressed envelopes.

Financial aid application & reports fees:

FAFSA: free;

CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE: \$9.00 registration fee, plus \$16.00 for each college receiving the report.

Travel expenses: Visits to colleges are optional, but very helpful. – Hundreds of dollars

Note: You must budget your time as well as your money when applying to colleges. Investigating a number of colleges in junior year will allow you to select a maximum of 5 or 8 colleges to send completed applications to during senior year

Apply well in advance of the deadlines to avoid costly rush delivery..

**The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is a government form that is used to calculate a family's eligibility for federal grants.** After completing the FAFSA, the student will receive and email Student Aid Report on which the EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC) will be listed.

The EFC is the financial aid term for the amount that students and their parents might reasonably be expected to contribute toward college costs. Formulas are established to estimate your ability to pay, relative to other applicants.

The goals of EFC estimations are:

consistency: to expect similar amounts from families that have similar circumstances

progressivity: to expect proportionally greater or lesser amounts from families that are in stronger or weaker financial positions

How do I know what my EFC is?

Due to the overwhelming and long-standing prevalence of income redistribution in the college costs arena, how much your family will be expected to pay is the right question to ask -- not how much a particular college costs.

Here is a simplified calculation of *the parents' portion* of the Expected Family Contribution:

**Parents' Incomes (all sources)**

less: Expenses, Adjustments (not including IRAs and Keoghs)  
 less: Taxes on Income = Available Income  
 less: an income allowance (table)

**Real Estate and Business Equity**

plus: Cash, Savings, etc.  
 plus: Net Value of Investments = Total Assets  
 less: an asset allowance = Remaining Assets

**Available Income**

plus: a %-age of Remaining Assets = Adjusted Available Income

**Adjusted Available Income**

times: a "taxation" rate (table) = Parents' Expected Contribution

**Parents' Expected Contribution + STUDENT'S Expected Contribution**

= **Expected Family Contribution**  
 =====

\* Divide EFC by number of family members in college

## Methodologies:

There are two primary EFC methodologies for determining EFC:

**Federal Methodology (FM)** uses the FAFSA and applies to all federal assistance and many other programs. **All students should submit the FAFSA.** It's free. The FAFSA determines your eligibility for assistance in most cases.

**Institutional Methodology (IM)** uses the CSS PROFILE and applies only to those schools and financial scholarship programs who subscribe to it. The PROFILE does not determine eligibility. It merely reports your financial situation to the schools and programs that use their own formulas to determine your eligibility for assistance.

Institutional Methodology probes deeper into family financial condition and special circumstances. One example is that the IM includes home equity in assets, while the FM does not.

Some schools and programs use their own forms and applications for determining eligibility for financial assistance. Be sure you ask the colleges directly for correct information.

## How does EFC relate to financial aid eligibility?

The EFC is subtracted from the costs of attending a particular college to arrive at an estimate of "demonstrated financial need." The idea is that what the family can reasonably afford (the EFC) remains the same no matter what the college costs. Therefore your need will be greater at an expensive college than at a low-priced college.

**For Example:** Assuming the EFC is \$5,000, how does that translate to "need" at different colleges?

	College A	College B	College C
Total Cost of Attendance	\$17,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 5,000
less EFC	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
= Need	\$12,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 0

You are generally eligible for aid equal to the amount of your demonstrated financial need. The amount of aid you receive depends on how much aid is available.

The College Counselor will arrange financial aid seminars in December of the senior year. Forms are to be completed online at [www.fafsa.edu.gov](http://www.fafsa.edu.gov) and <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/prf/index.jsp>.

Be sure to ask for assistance whenever you need it or are unsure of your next step.

## WHAT ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS?

- At the end of every school year, students are scrambling to figure out how to pay for the college they want to attend. IT'S TOO LATE to worry about that in March, April and May of the senior year! Start applying NOW. Search online through one of the MANY search programs that are available. The more scholarship applications you complete, the more likely it is that you will earn scholarships.

- Check with your parents' employers. Often major corporations offer scholarship opportunities to the children of their employees.
- Check to see if the colleges and universities to which you are applying award merit-based scholarships. If so, is the deadline to apply for these scholarships earlier than the application deadline? Is there a separate form to complete for scholarship consideration?
- **LISTEN TO THE MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS, READ YOU EMAILED WEEKLY BULLETIN AND CHECK YOUR NAVIANCE ACCOUNT.** You will learn about numerous scholarship possibilities from these sources!
- **AND REMEMBER, scholarships are awarded to students who have excelled in a particular area,** academics, the arts, community service, and athletics.
- Also, scholarships are sometimes awarded to students who meet a college or university need. Many institutions are seeking underrepresented populations, for example, first generation college attendees or students from low income backgrounds.

**There is no "cookie cutter" scholarship. Each scholarship has different criteria for consideration. The scholarship search and application process is as demanding as the college search and application process. Again, START NOW!!!!**

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## NAVIANCE AND FAMILY CONNECTION

We are pleased to introduce Family Connection from **Naviance**, a Web-based service designed especially for students and parents. Family Connection is a comprehensive website that you and your parents can use to help in making decisions about colleges and careers. Family Connection is linked with Counselor's Office, a service that we use in our office to track and analyze data about college and career plans, so it provides up-to-date information that's specific to our school.

Family Connection will allow you and your parents to:

- ☐ Get involved in the planning and advising process – Build a resume, complete on-line surveys, and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges and careers
- ☐ Research colleges – Compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data from our school for students who have applied and been admitted in the past
- ☐ Sign up for college visits – Find out which colleges are visiting our school and sign up to attend those sessions

Family Connection also lets us share information with you and your child about up-coming meetings and events, local scholarship opportunities, and other Web resources for college and career information. In addition, the site includes a link that your child can use to send us an e-mail message. To visit our school's Family Connection site, use your Web browser to connect to:

<http://connection.naviance.com/bfhsla>

When you visit the site for the first time, please enter your personal registration code in the New User box and follow the on-screen instructions to create your own account. If you do not know your registration code, please contact Ms. Flair in the counseling office for assistance. Note that you and your parents may each receive different registration codes, and that each code may be used only once. Once you have your own account, you will sign in using the user name and password you chose during the registration process.

We hope that you will find this resource helpful. If you have further questions about Family Connection, please contact us in the counseling office.

## BFHS PROFILE

Please see the School's website for a copy of the Profile. Profiles are sent with every transcript mailed from the Guidance Office. On the Profile, we list all course work available at Ben Franklin. We also include standardized testing information for the current senior class as well as the results of National Scholarship programs, (Merit, Achievement and Hispanic Scholar). Finally, we list all schools to which our students have been admitted in the past five years with an indication of where the most recent graduates are attending college.

The Profile gives colleges and universities indication of the academic rigor offered by Ben Franklin.  
It is our brag sheet.