

# YOUR JOURNEY TO COLLEGE

## How to Make your College Application Stand Out



Answer all questions fully and clearly. Make sure you do not have any grammatical or spelling errors.

Submit your application at least two weeks before the deadline and make sure all supporting documents arrive on time as well.

Take a strong program during senior year and keep grades high. If the college requires senior year mid-year grades, your grades should be commensurate with the grades on your transcript. This may play a significant role in the answer you receive.

If you have received any awards or accolades after your application has been submitted, be sure to submit additional information to the Admissions Office.

Keep in contact with an admissions official throughout the process and ask any questions that you have in regard to the application process. This demonstrates your continued interest in attending their school. You, rather than your parent, should initiate any contact.

Visit, visit and visit – speak to a faculty member in the area you are interested in majoring in.

Challenge yourself in a rigorous curriculum throughout high school – it is better to get a slightly lower grade in a more challenging college preparatory class than an “easy A” in a less difficult course.

If your transcript lacks rigor, consider taking college courses at a local two or four-year college after school or over the summer to supplement your high school curriculum. If you do well in these classes, college admissions officials will take note as they are looking to ascertain that students can handle the rigor of a college curriculum when they get to their campus.

Supplement your academic record with a substantial extracurricular resume. Leadership positions and community service contributions are particularly significant. Admissions officials are looking for students that will contribute to their campus community. They are looking for students with unique talents and passions that will contribute to a well-rounded campus. Compile a comprehensive activity resume that will demonstrate what your interests are outside of the

classroom environment. Highlight experiences such as volunteer activities, leadership positions, high school clubs, athletics, honors & awards, special talents and work experience. Students who devote a large amount of hours to employment after school to help with family finances or responsibilities should communicate that within your application; that is a positive attribute and shows why you may not have been able to participate in as many other activities.

Show a passion for something. Joining ten clubs and contributing little to them will not be as beneficial for you as joining two or three and making a substantial contribution and commitment to that experience. Join activities that you are truly interested in and will benefit you in the long run.

Search for an internship experience that correlates with the field you would like to enter. A recommendation from your supervisor may be helpful as well as the demonstration of the commitment to that field you are interested in.

If your grades have overall slipped one year or in a particular class and this is a deviation from your traditional performance, include an explanation with your application.

If you have encountered adversity in your life and feel comfortable disclosing the circumstances, share your experiences within your essay or in another section of the application.

If you are a first generation college student, share that information as well.

Choose the professionals who will write your letters carefully. Ascertain if they are truly interested in writing a letter for you and if they are articulate. It is generally preferable to have a core subject area teacher write these letters. If you are majoring in art, dance, theatre or music, a teacher in that discipline is recommended as well. Provide your teacher with several weeks notice of your request as well as any information they will require. Provide a resume of your activities and some highlights of your experiences in their class. Make sure you ask a teacher who knows you well and will be able to provide a positive appraisal of you as a student. This may be a teacher in whose class you were struggling and where you worked diligently to raise your grade, not necessarily in whose class you received an "A" when the material was very easy for you. Be cognizant of how many letters the college will accept. If they require two, do not send five. If they specify one letter only, ask if a counselor letter is counted in this statistic. If you send more letters than will be accepted, you run the risk of having subsequent letters discarded after the required number is received. Make sure the letters that you send will be utilized, and be selective about which teachers you request a letter from.

### **Tips for stand out essays:**

Grab the reader with an interesting beginning.

Be honest and write the essay in your own voice – do not over edit.

Your essay should be creative, thought provoking and original.

Answer the questions in a way that displays your strengths and values.

Make sure the essay reflects who you truly are and what you will bring to the campus.

Be direct and make sure you answer the essay question(s).

Make your supplemental essays just as strong.

If you are setting up an interview, find out if the interview will be evaluative or informational. An evaluative interview will become part of your application file and will require further preparation.

Know what the college is looking for in an applicant. They are looking for the right fit for their campus and you should be seeking the right fit for you as well. Highlight your attributes that match those of their students. Demonstrate what you will bring to their campus if accepted.

Depending upon the philosophy or goals of the college, an applicant from a geographical area that differs from their average student may be of particular interest. Colleges generally seek to contribute to the diversity on campus. Diversity of background or culture may be of interest as well.

If you have alumni connections, it is generally to your benefit to disclose this.