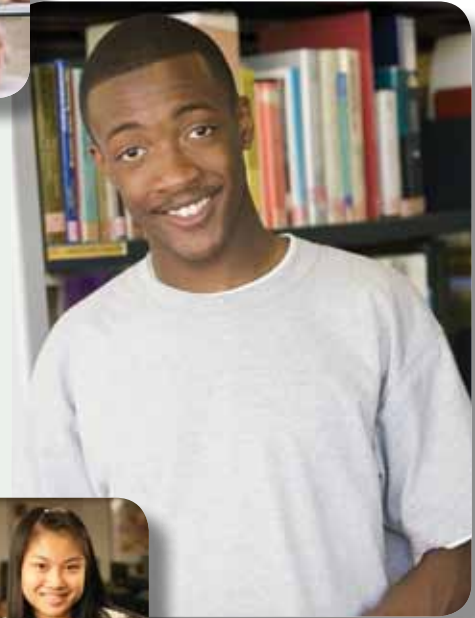




**NACAC** National Association for  
College Admission Counseling  
[www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)

**CSO** Center for Student Opportunity  
*Promoting a College-Bound Culture*



# GUIDING THE WAY TO HIGHER EDUCATION: STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

## EARLY HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

*Grades 9 – First Semester 11*



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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING

# GUIDING THE WAY TO HIGHER EDUCATION: STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

EARLY HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

*Grades 9 – First Semester 11*



National Association for  
College Admission Counseling  
[www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)



## DEAR VOLUNTEER,

Thank you for participating in the National Association for Admission Counseling's (NACAC) Step-by-Step Workshops for Students. By engaging the support of a national network of professional college counselors, it is our goal to expand and improve college counseling for first-generation and otherwise underserved college-bound students. Your individual expertise and commitment are crucial to this effort.

The prospect of college is daunting for all students. Pressures are compounded for the first-generation or underserved student. Without adequate guidance from parents who have experienced the process themselves, and without a strong support network in school and in the community, the obstacles to college access for first-generation and underserved students are many.

Your job as a volunteer is to help promising students overcome these challenges and examine the world of college opportunity that awaits them. Central to the Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students is the hope that you will help to make students more fully aware of the college opportunities available and accessible to them. We hope that no student will be limited in the college search process. Therefore it is important to actively help students understand that their dreams of college need not be compromised by financial considerations, geographical barriers or other obstacles.



The curriculum that follows is a detailed plan to guide students with whom you will be working on the path to college success. We encourage you to follow the session plans accordingly, while keeping in mind the special needs of any student population at hand. Feel free to apply your own expertise and instruction, as necessary, to maximize the effectiveness and benefit to students.

Thank you again for choosing to volunteer your time with the NACAC Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students curriculum and for continuing to be committed to helping all students reach their full potential. Please feel free to contact the NACAC Director of Professional Development at [pd@nacacnet.org](mailto:pd@nacacnet.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

**Joyce Smith**

*Chief Executive Officer  
National Association  
for College Admission  
Counseling*

**Mary Lee Hoganson**

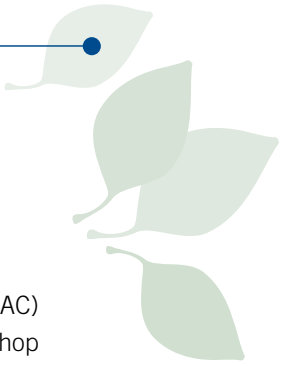
*Past President  
National Association  
for College Admission  
Counseling  
College Consultant, IL*

**Phyllis Gill**

*Past President  
Southern Association  
for College Admission  
Counseling  
Providence Day  
School, NC*

**Joan Mudge**

*Past Vice President  
for Professional  
Development  
National Association  
for College Admission  
Counseling  
Garrison Forest  
School, MD*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### CO-CHAIRS

**Mary Lee Hoganson**, College Consultant, NACAC Past President 2007, IL

**Phyllis Gill**, Associate Director of College Guidance, Providence Day School, NC

**Joan Mudge**, College Consultant, Garrison Forest School, MD

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Gwen Bailey**, Retired Guidance Counselor, SC

**Teri Calcagno**, College Counselor, Central Catholic High School, OR

**Kelly Farmer**, Assistant Director of Admissions, Villa Julie College, MD

**Latrice Harris-Collins**, Multicultural Community Outreach Coordinator, Marquette University, WI

**Diane Hoge**, Retired School Counselor, WI

**Mary Alice Katon**, Director of College Access Programs, Communities In Schools, NC

**Sonja Montiel**, Independent College Counselor, College Confidence, CA

**Candace Powell Kinard**, Associate Director, College Access Program, Philadelphia Education Fund, PA

**Linda Shapiro**, Independent College Counselor, MA

**Kalith Smith**, Academic Counselor, New Mexico Military Institute, NM

**Lynn Stewart**, College Counselor, Lake Highland Preparatory School, FL

**Amy Takayama-Perez**, CAMPUS (College Achievement Minority Program for Unique Students) Coordinator, Loudoun County Public Schools, VA

**Pat Walters**, Retired College Counselor, TX





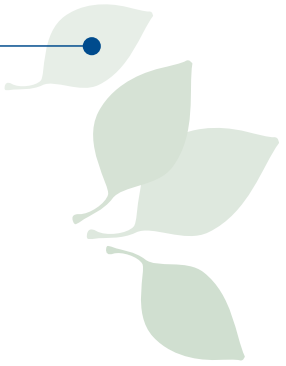
## INTRODUCTION

Intervention in the earlier years of high school can put students on a successful path to college attainment and graduation. At this stage, a counselor's role should include:

- Encouraging students to see themselves as college bound
- Instilling the belief that college is accessible for everyone
- Building a strong foundation for students in and outside of the classroom by helping students choose a college preparatory course schedule in high school and encouraging extracurricular involvement
- Putting together a plan for standardized testing
- Building a student's self-motivation to pursue college and helping him or her build a support network of adult mentors to help reach that goal
- Helping students assess their career interests and aspirations and begin researching colleges to pursue those goals

**The following six session curriculum lays a comprehensive foundation to address all of the above.**





## SESSIONS

Early High School Curriculum  
Grades 9 – First Semester 11

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# 1

## SESSION 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME! MY FUTURE PLANS START TODAY

The purpose of this session is for students to think about their academic and personal goals for the future, how they can reach them, and why college may be an important step for them to take. With their career goals in mind, the facilitator can show how higher education fits into their plans. Students will also learn about the incentives to go to college as well as the myths about financial aid.

### *Objectives:*

By the end of this session, students will

- have a better understanding of their short term and long term goals
- find peers with similar interests who can help them in the college process
- learn how personal interests and activities can affect their college choices
- understand the personal and financial benefits of post secondary education
- find answers to questions about college costs

### *Activities and Handouts:*

**Activity #1:** Common Interests and Connections

Handout: Ice Breaker Bingo Game

**Activity #2:** What's Your Dream?

Handout: Long Term Dreams/Goals

**Activity #3:** Why College?

Handout: Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1

**Activity #4:** College Is Affordable

Handout: College Costs/Financial Aid



1

SESSION 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME! MY FUTURE PLANS START TODAY

## ACTIVITY #1: COMMON INTERESTS AND CONNECTIONS

### *Opening Discussion:*

Even though the decision to go to college is a very personal one and each student needs to decide what is best for him or her, talking with other students who have similar goals and interests can be very helpful.

### *Activity/Handout:*

**College Bound Bingo**—an ice breaker activity to get the peer conversations started.

### *Instructions:*

1. Print and copy a bingo card for each player. (Will need pencils also)
2. Players circulate to find group members who match descriptions in the bingo squares.
3. When a match is found, the player writes the name of the individual in the square.
4. Different names must be used in each square. When a player has filled a row with names, s/he yells “Bingo!”
5. With the group, check the squares and identify the individuals described.
6. Continue the game for a second round, with the new goal of filling the entire card. (Probably would need to set a 5 minute time-limit and then award person who came closest.)
7. When a player has filled the entire card, s/he yells “Bingo!”
8. Check the entire card, identifying group members matching each description.
9. Read through card and have all participants stand when a category applies to them



## COLLEGE BOUND BINGO

<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>O</b>
Does volunteer work	Would like to go out of state for college	Is a 9th grader	Speaks more than 1 language	Has been on the honor roll at school
Has a leadership role in his/her high school	Is active in a church, temple, or mosque	Wants to attend a small college	Wants to major in English or journalism	Whose parents or sibling attended college
Wants to major in history or psychology	Was born in a country other than the U.S.	<b>FREE</b>	Has visited a college campus in the last year	Participates in at least one extra-curricular activity at school
Has attended more than one high school	Plays on a sports team	Has a part-time job	Is a 10th grader	Wants to attend a large university
Plays a musical instrument	Is part of an academic enrichment program outside of school (like Upward Bound)	Whose parents did not attend college	Wants to attend a community college	Wants to major in math or the sciences

1

SESSION 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME! MY FUTURE PLANS START TODAY

## ACTIVITY #2: WHAT'S YOUR DREAM?

### *Opening Discussion:*

Ask students to think about their values, skills, and interests as they look ahead to their life after high school. Then, ask them to list many of those options (military, work, trades, college). To focus the attention on the importance of college, ask students to think about lifestyle choices—career, car, house, etc.—and share information about how a 2 or 4 year college degree can help them reach their goals.

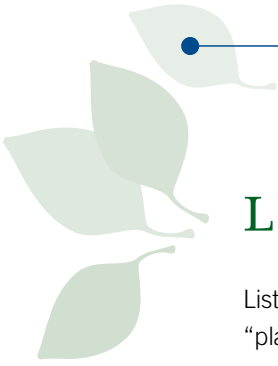
If computers are available, part of the initial discussion should involve searching helpful Web sites (Center for Student Opportunity's College Center—[www.CSOLCollegeCenter.org](http://www.CSOLCollegeCenter.org), College Board—[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), ACT—[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)) to show students how to do career and interest searches. Cyber Guidance—[www.cyberguidance.net](http://www.cyberguidance.net)—is a good site that has an excellent section on jobs, what education is required for various jobs, and where certain job/career interests can lead a student. If computers are not available, please refer students to the Web sites to visit when they do have computer access.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Long Term Dreams/Goals**

### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute the Long-term Dreams/Goals handout
2. Give students 10-15 minutes to complete the worksheet
3. Bring the students back together and facilitate a follow up discussion about their responses.



## LONG-TERM DREAMS/GOALS

List your dreams/goals, such as “design clothing,” “draw architectural plans for my dream house,” “play professional sports,” “become a doctor,” etc.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What are the first steps to achieving these goals—list them here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

List how a postsecondary education can help fulfill these goals:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

From NACAC’s *Guiding the Way to Higher Education: Families, Counselors, and Communities Together*, 2007.

1

SESSION 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME! MY FUTURE PLANS START TODAY

## ACTIVITY # 3: WHY COLLEGE?

### *Opening Discussion:*

Once a student has an idea of his/her interests, the next step is to ask “Why college?”. Inform students that it is also very important to think about who will influence their decision about going to college. Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you might end up someplace else.” Have students think about and briefly discuss this quote as they are determining the WHY and WHO.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1**

### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute the “Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 1” handout
2. Give students 10-15 minutes to complete the worksheet
3. Bring the students back together and facilitate a follow up discussion about their responses.





## PERSONAL COLLEGE COUNSELING QUESTIONNAIRE I

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Why are you going to college?*

Check those that apply and add onto the end if there are responses that are more appropriate for you:

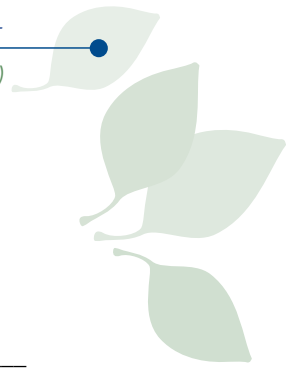
- I'm not ready to get a job yet
- I want to continue my education
- To make more/new friends
- To continue playing a certain sport
- To be with my friends
- To prepare for a career
- To have fun
- My parents insist
- For the personal challenge
- I want to see a different part of the country
- To better humankind
- I don't have anything better to do
- I enjoy learning
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### *Who Will Make the College Decision?*

Who do you think should make the decision of the college you attend?

- Me. It's my future.
- Me, with strong input from my parents
- Me, with some input from my parents
- Parents, with some input from me
- My college counselor
- My advisor/mentor
- Based on where my parents went to college
- Based on where my older brothers or sisters have gone to college
- Based on where my friends will be

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." *South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School*. 2004



## PERSONAL COLLEGE COUNSELING QUESTIONNAIRE I (PAGE 2)

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

In the space below, please respond to the following questions. Your responses are for your personal information and college counseling only. Therefore, please respond openly and honestly.

1. In which academic area (Math, Science, History, English, Spanish, etc.) do you do best? Is this subject the easiest for you? Why do you think you do well in this subject?
2. In which academic area (Math, Science, History, English, Spanish, etc.) do you do the worst? Is this subject the hardest for you? Why do you think you don't do well in this subject?
3. Which academic subject do you enjoy the most? Why do you enjoy it?
4. Which academic subject do you enjoy the least? Why don't you enjoy it?
5. What are your interests outside of school?
6. What's something that you're really good at that no one else knows about?
7. Do you play any sports or are you involved in any clubs or extracurricular activities?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." *South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School*. 2004

## 1

## SESSION 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME! MY FUTURE PLANS START TODAY

## ACTIVITY # 4: COLLEGE COSTS/FINANCIAL AID

### *Opening Discussion:*

Going away to college can be exciting because students can live away from home, make new friends, take some amazing courses—but remind students that a college degree can give them even more than that. Data shows that a college degree correlates with salary ranges. Today, employers use diplomas and degrees more and more to select candidates for jobs and a person with a bachelor's degree will typically earn nearly twice as much per year as a person with a high school diploma. In fact, any education beyond high school (2 year, 4 year, military training) will increase your earnings.

### **A Federal Government financial aid publication offers two concrete examples<sup>2</sup>:**

- A dental assistant, who must have two years of college, will earn enough money to buy groceries for a week after working only one day. A high school graduate who is a salesperson in a department store would have to work three days to buy the same groceries.
- An accountant with a college degree will earn enough money in a year to buy a four-door compact car, but a high school graduate working as an aerobics instructor would need three years of income to buy the same car.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Financial Aid True/False Quiz**

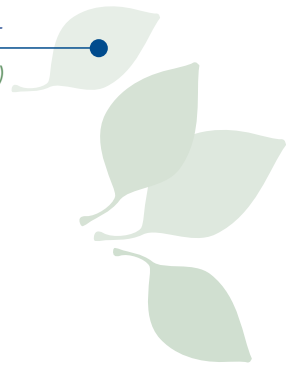
#### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute the Financial Aid True/False Quiz
2. Give students 5-10 minutes to complete the worksheet
3. Bring the students back together, review the answers, and facilitate a follow up discussion about each question.

#### *Here are the answers:*

1. False—generate a discussion about learning, having more job/career options, creating more opportunities for yourself
2. False
3. True and False—talk about the federal government sites, help at the library and community centers
4. True
5. False—talk about two year schools, certificate programs, and military options
6. False—a college graduate will earn almost twice as much
7. True
8. True and False—colleges may give some full scholarships, but most are partial, and some do not give scholarships at all. Discuss the differences among DI, II, III.
9. False—here is where you can talk about EFC, merit aid, aid packages
10. True—talk about co-op options, for example

<sup>2</sup> [www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/learning.jsp](http://www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/learning.jsp)



## FINANCIAL AID TRUE/FALSE QUIZ

1. College is not worth the debt involved. It's better to go directly to work. **TIF**
2. Only A students can go to college and get financial aid. **TIF**
3. Applying for financial aid is very difficult and complicated. **TIF**
4. College can be expensive, but two-thirds of all undergraduate students receive financial aid to help cover college costs. **TIF**
5. To make it in today's world, you must have a four-year degree. **TIF**
6. Over the course of a lifetime, a high school graduate can earn as much as a college graduate. **TIF**
7. The average annual income of a person with a college degree is over \$55,000. **TIF**
8. Colleges give full athletic scholarships to athletes. **TIF**
9. Private colleges are too expensive and you shouldn't apply if you don't have the money. **TIF**
10. Some employers will help you pay for college. **TIF**

1

SESSION 1: IT IS ALL ABOUT ME! MY FUTURE PLANS START TODAY

## WRAP-UP

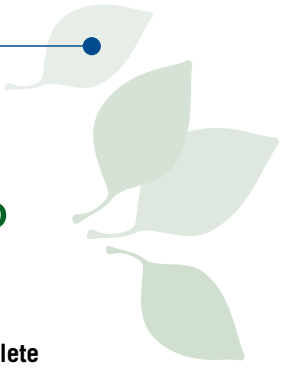
### *Keep in Mind:*

Ensure that students leave the session knowing that having a better grasp of their short term and long term goals will not make their path to college easier to facilitate but will increase their satisfaction in life. While goals and dreams may change over the course of a year, month, or even a day, the necessity to continue to analyze, organize, and realize dreams and goals always remains the same.

### *Homework:*

1. Students should set aside 30 minutes in a quiet space free of distractions.
2. With a pen and paper in hand, students should take the full half hour to write a list of things that they want to accomplish in their life. This activity should not be restricted to academic or career achievements. Additionally, students should not be limited by the resources that they have available to them now. Encourage students to THINK BIG and WIDE.
3. Students should then take time away from this list and return to it later.
4. When the students come back to their lists, they should classify the goals into ones that they can complete while in high school, while in college, and after graduation.
5. Students should think about which goals they can accomplish with or without college education.
6. Finally, pass out the “Paying for College is a Family Affair” for students to take home, read, and/or discuss with their parents.





## PAYING FOR COLLEGE IS A FAMILY AFFAIR AND HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

**THE SAD FACT** is that many students who earn admission to college never go because they do not complete the financial aid process.

**THE GOOD NEWS** is that there are lots of ways to pay for college and lots of information and help are available to students who honestly need financial aid assistance!!

### *FACTS WORTH NOTING:*

- The earlier you begin to think about paying for college the better.
- Money is available to almost every student who attends college.
- No one gets financial aid by wishing! You need to apply and follow through.
- Even the most ambitious student will need assistance from the adults in the household in order to complete the financial aid application process.
- You do not need to pay anyone to help you apply for financial aid! Beware of anyone who offers a service for a fee
- Often the most expensive colleges have the “deepest pockets” and can help the very neediest students to make college affordable.

In a perfect world, families begin thinking about college finances when their children are still in grade school. But we all know this is NOT a perfect world. So—the time for you to start thinking about paying for college is TODAY!

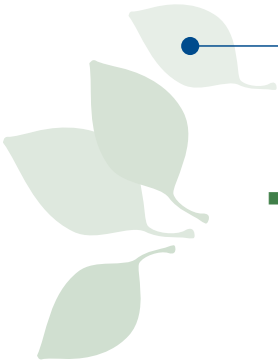
### *There is a lot of money available to students with need:*

While it is true that college costs increase almost yearly, it is also true that there is more financial aid available than ever before—according to the College Board, more than 180 billion. This money comes from the following sources:

- US Government programs, which provide more than \$116 billion a year in grants, loans and work-study assistance.
- State grant and loan programs.
- College and university grant, loan and scholarship programs.
- Scholarships given by foundations, corporations, and community organizations.

These are the sources of financial aid:

- **Grants and scholarships:** Also called “gift aid,” grants are based on financial need and do not need to be repaid. Scholarships are most-often awarded on the basis of strong academic achievement, a special talent or ability, or personal characteristics.
- **Work-study:** This option gives students the opportunity for part-time employment either on campus or off campus at a private, non-profit organization or public agency to help them meet their financial need.

- 
- **Loans:** These are offered to students or parents and must be repaid. Loans that are awarded based on financial need are low-interest loans, usually sponsored by the federal government. Interest on these loans is paid by the government for students with the greatest need. Repayment does not begin until 6 months after completion of the college program and may be deferred until a later date under some special circumstances.

*APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID IS TIME-CONSUMING, BUT NOT HARD! Here is how the need-based application process generally works:*

1. Every student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the only application required by many colleges, and should be completed as soon as possible after January 1st of the senior year. As the name says, this is free! The preferred method for completing this form is online, although a paper copy is available. The Web site is: **www.fafsa.gov** (NOT “.com,” a fee-based, unnecessary service)
2. A few colleges and universities also require that students complete a financial aid form specific to the institution, or the College Scholarship Service Profile application, which is offered through the College Board. There is a fee for this form, but fee waivers are available through school counselors and college financial aid offices.
3. Financial aid offices use the information provided through these forms to determine a family’s ability to pay for college. This is called the “estimated family contribution” (EFC), and it is always the same, regardless of the cost of the college. That means that financial aid can help you afford even the most expensive college, if you qualify for admission.
4. In the spring of the senior year, colleges notify students of the amount and type of aid offered.
5. Students have until May 1st to compare offers of admission and financial aid in order to make one final college enrollment decision.

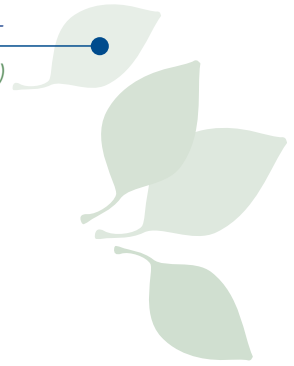
There are many people and resources who can help you find your way through the financial aid process. Your school counselor, your teachers, adults in your community or place of worship may all be available to advise you. At every college you consider, financial aid officers will be eager to help students and families understand and complete the financial aid process. Don’t be afraid to ask for lots and lots of help.

If you are a good student and an active participant in school and community, you may qualify for scholarships offered by corporations, foundations, religious organizations, or community groups. Ask at your school about possibilities. Do some research online at FastWeb ([www.fastweb.com/](http://www.fastweb.com/)) and The College Board ([http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch\\_ss/welcome.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp)).

In the end, all of the work required to apply for financial aid is well worth the effort! In 2006:

- College graduates earned an average of \$60,000.
- High School graduates earned an average of \$32,000.

Over the course of your life and career that difference will make up for the cost of even the most expensive college—many times over!!



For more information on financial aid visit: [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) and [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

## HERE IS HOW ONE STUDENT FINANCED A FIRST YEAR IN COLLEGE:

### Susan Smart

**Total Cost:** **\$21,120**

(Tuition, Room and Board, Books, Fees, Travel)

**EFC** **\$3,241**

(Estimated Family Contribution as determined by FAFSA)

*Financial need:* **\$17,879**

How she pays:

Scholarship from college	\$4,000
Federally subsidized student loan	\$3,500
State scholarship	\$2,500
Federal Pell Grant	\$1,060
Federal Perkins Loan	\$2,400
Federal SEOG Grant	\$300
Federal Work Study	\$1,600
Scholarship from church	\$1,500
Summer earnings	\$1,019





# 2

## SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

The purpose of this session is to help students understand that there exists a vast array of college possibilities for all students and that each student will be responsible for identifying his/her own college options. In this session, students will be encouraged to begin thinking about what they value and what they will look for in a college. Students will be exposed to some of the resources available for college research.

### *Objectives:*

By the end of this session, students will

- understand that the college experience is very different from the middle or high school experience
- gain an understanding of different types of colleges and the different experiences and opportunities offered
- have been introduced to some of the resources available for getting to know about colleges
- begin to explore the kind(s) of colleges which might be a “fit”
- have been introduced to resources for researching college information.

### *Materials and Handouts:*

**All Activities:** blackboard and chalk, dry-erase board and markers, or flipchart with markers

**Recap Activity:** Have students share their lists from their Session I homework assignment.

**Activity #1:** Evaluating Your School Experience to Date

**Activity #2:** Getting to Know College Possibilities

Handout: Charting Your Course for College—Part One

**Activity #3:** Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About College but Were Afraid to Ask

Handout: Charting Your Course for College—Part Two

Handout: Doing Your Research

Several college guidebooks and college viewbooks

**Activity #4:** Using the Internet to Research Colleges

Handout: Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration

Access to computers, if possible. Alternatively, you may want to photocopy examples of web pages which students may access for free.

## 2

## SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

## ACTIVITY #1: EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL EXPERIENCE TO DATE

### *Opening Discussion:*

Remind students that they probably didn't have much choice when it came to selecting the schools that they are currently attending. Additionally, remind students that there may not have been a large number of options regarding their choice for high school. However, the sky's the limit when it comes to the choices students will have for college. And this is a good time to begin thinking about all of the possibilities that exist!

### *Activity/Handouts:*

None

### *Questions to open up discussion with students:*

- How was it decided which high school you would attend?
- What have you liked about your current school?
- What would you change if you could?
- How well do you anticipate that your high school will help you reach your goals?
- If you could choose your high school now, what would you look for?

### *Instructions:*

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of qualities that they believe would make a school "just right" and list these qualities on blackboard or flip charts.
2. Have students discuss the qualities on the list and how these might apply to their college search.

2

SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

## ACTIVITY # 2: GETTING TO KNOW COLLEGE POSSIBILITIES

### *Opening Discussion:*

Colleges aren't all the same. Different colleges and universities have different missions (or functions, or goals). This activity is designed to teach students the different types of higher education opportunities that exist for them after high school.

### *Activity/Handout:*

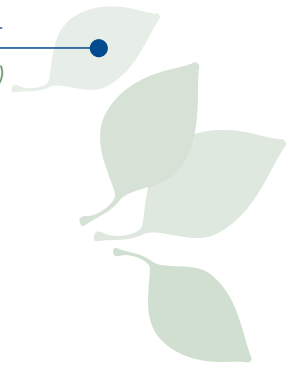
#### **Charting Your Course for College**—Part One

### *Instructions:*

1. Give every student the handout entitled “Charting Your Course for College—Part One”. Allow students a few minutes to read the handout and then review the different types of colleges with the students.
2. Write, as headings, each category of college on the blackboard or flip chart pages.
3. Ask students to suggest names of colleges which they think fit into each category. Help them evaluate each suggested college accurately, and then write the name of the college under the correct heading on blackboard or flipcharts

AND/OR

4. Ask students to suggest people they know who have attended specific colleges and then evaluate which category of college that institution falls under. Write the name of the college under the correct heading on blackboard or flipcharts.



## CHARTING YOUR COURSE FOR COLLEGE (PART ONE)<sup>3</sup>

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler...  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

—Robert Frost

Few decisions that you will make in your life will seem more important than your choice of a college. In fact, the career paths open to you, many of the friends you will maintain for a lifetime, even the area of the country in which you are likely to live and work will be strongly influenced by your college decision. But it is important to remember that choosing a college—or even a list of colleges to which to apply—is not an exact science. There is not “one perfect” college for anyone. Instead, there are many colleges that would be a fine match for every college-bound student. The trick is to identify your unique priorities for selecting a college, carefully research the characteristics of a range of colleges and universities and, finally, make a match of several options to which you will make application.

### GETTING STARTED

As you begin planning for college selection, take stock of your priorities. You will be sitting in the classroom at your final choice, not your parents and not your best friend. Although it is a good idea to seek advice, especially from teachers or counselors who know colleges well, in the end, no one can tell you where you’ll be satisfied and happy.

A good place to start is by considering what you have and have not found important and rewarding in your high school experience.

#### *Ask questions like:*

- How do I learn best? In large or lecture-style classes, or in small discussion/seminar settings?
- Do I prefer being one of the best in a class, or do I need the competition of equally bright peers in order to challenge myself?
- Do I learn more quickly when structure is clear and uniform, or does freedom to make choices about how I spend my time for a class fit me better?
- What extracurricular activities have been most important to me? Which will I want to continue in college?
- What have I learned about my academic interests and abilities that will influence what I might study in college?
- Who are my friends? Do I want my relationships in college to be similar or different?

Answers to these questions will help you apply what you have learned about yourself during your high school years as you set priorities for your college experience.

<sup>3</sup> Copyright 2004: Mary Lee Hoganson

Before you begin picking college possibilities, it is also a good idea to have a candid conversation with your parents. Are there limits to what they can or will contribute to your college finances? (If your parents are separated or divorced, ask this question of both parents since many colleges will expect a financial contribution from both.) Are there colleges which they hope you will consider? Are they comfortable with allowing you to travel a great distance for college?

If you and your parents are on the same page—great! If not, it is better to negotiate differences of opinion at the beginning of the selection process rather than at the end, when you have selected a college which your parents will not support as a final choice. If you find your parents too narrowly focused on colleges close to home, or those with “name-brand recognition”, your counselor or the college consultant may be able to educate them about the wide range of quality colleges. If they are worried about paying for college, your counselors can help them understand the financial aid process.

### CONSIDERING COLLEGE TYPES:

Colleges aren't all the same. Different colleges and universities have different missions (or functions, or goals). While no two are exactly alike, most fit into one or more of the following categories:

**Liberal Arts Colleges** focus on the education of undergraduate students. Classes are generally taught by professors who see teaching as their primary responsibility. Because most liberal arts colleges are smaller than universities, classes tend to be smaller and more personal attention is available. As opposed to preparation for a specific career path, students who attend liberal arts colleges are exposed to a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences and sciences. In addition, they select at least one area of in-depth study which is their college “major”. Many employers look for graduates of liberal arts programs, valuing their well-rounded preparation.

**Universities** are generally larger and include a liberal arts college, as well as some professionally-oriented colleges and graduate programs. Universities offer a greater range of academic choices than do liberal arts colleges. They will likely provide more extensive resources in terms of library, laboratory, fine arts and athletic facilities. At many large universities class size will reflect institutional size, with most introductory classes being taught in a lecture format. Some classes will be taught by graduate students. Professors at major universities will be involved in research which adds to the vitality of the academic community, but may also draw energy, focus, and resources away from undergraduate teaching.

**Technical Institutes and Professional Schools** enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they want to study and emphasize preparation for specific careers, for example in music or fine arts, engineering or technical sciences. You will want to be quite sure of your future direction before selecting one of these options.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities** find their origins in the time when African-American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students at HBCUs have a unique opportunity to experience an educational community in which they are a part of the majority. They find committed faculty mentors who encourage their expectations of success.

Similarly, **Women's Colleges**, with their larger numbers of female faculty and administrators, offer college women confidence-building role models, greater opportunities to serve in a full range of student leadership positions, and a heightened awareness of career possibilities for women. Women's colleges graduate a high number of science majors, as well as students who continue on to graduate school and/or professional studies.

**Community or junior colleges** generally offer the first two years of a liberal arts education, in addition to specialized occupational preparation. An associate degree is awarded at the end of a two-year program of studies, following which many students continue their education at a four-year institution.

## ACTIVITY # 3: EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

### *Opening Discussion:*

In this activity students are encouraged to investigate the many characteristics of colleges and universities that should be considered as they explore options and what constitutes an appropriate match or “good fit.” In addition, students are introduced to reliable resources for college research.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Charting Your Course for College—Part Two**

#### **Doing Your Research**

#### **Several college guidebooks and college viewbooks**

### *Instructions:*

1. Give every student the handout entitled “Charting Your Course for College—Part Two.”
2. Ask students to brainstorm a list of everything they would want to know about a college before deciding to apply. (For example: Is it in a city or the country? What majors are offered? Does the college have fraternities and sororities?) List these suggestions on a clean blackboard or fresh flipchart pages. Keep prompting until a relatively long list is created. Prompts might include questions like:
  - a. What about a location might make a difference to you?
  - b. What about where you will live at college?
  - c. What kinds of facilities might you want on a campus?
  - d. What will you want to do to have fun?
3. After the list is completed and all responses have been recorded, ask each student to consider and pick the three-to-five questions that are the most important to him/her. Make a checkmark next to each question picked.
4. Circle the top vote getters.
5. Ask students where they think they could find information about each topic/quality circled.
6. Introduce students to several good college guidebooks and a sampling of college view books.
7. Divide students into small groups. Give each group at least one guidebook and several college view books. Ask each group to develop a list of information/answers to questions that they were able to locate.
8. Have each group report on what was located.
9. As a closer for this activity, distribute handout “Doing Your Research” to be read at home.



## CHARTING YOUR COURSE FOR COLLEGE (PART TWO)<sup>4</sup>

Here are some other important things to consider in selecting colleges:

**ACCREDITATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE FEDERAL STUDENT AID PROGRAMS:** The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by colleges and universities meets acceptable levels of quality. Accrediting agencies, which are private educational associations of regional or national scope, develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. To participate in the federal student aid programs, an institution must be accredited by an accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a “reliable authority as to the quality of postsecondary education” within the meaning of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended. This is all very technical, but the bottom line is if a college or university is unaccredited, it will not be able to offer federal student aid. You should be very cautious about considering a school that does not participate in the federal student aid programs.

**INSTITUTION SIZE:** The size of a college or university will have an impact upon many of your opportunities and experiences. The range of academic majors offered, the extracurricular possibilities, the amount of personal attention you’ll receive, the number of books in the library, will all be influenced by size.

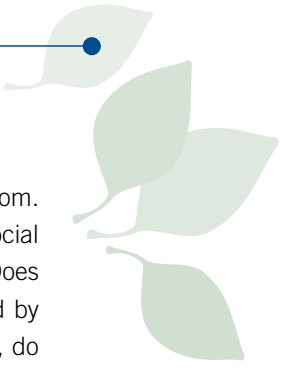
In considering size, however, it is essential that you look beyond the raw number of students attending. Consider instead, average class size for both first year students and upperclassmen. Investigate not just the number of faculty, but also how accessible faculty are to students. Perhaps you are considering a small department within a large school, or vice versa. Large schools may offer extensive support services for students with special needs or those who are experiencing difficulty. Smaller schools may not be able to fund similar programs. On the other hand, extra support may not be necessary if faculty work closely with individual students.

**LOCATION:** Distance from home may be important to you. Is it important to you to be able to visit home frequently, or do you see this as a time to experience a new part of the country? Some of you will prefer an urban environment with access to museums, ethnic food, or major league ball games. Others will hope for easy access to outdoor activities or the serenity and safety of a more rural setting.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAMS:** If you have a good idea of something specific you want to study in college or a career for which you want to prepare, look for well-respected academic departments in this discipline at the colleges you explore. Talk with professors and students in these departments. Research relative reputation by surveying adults already in the field and using printed resources which rank academic departments.

You should not limit your selection process to academic program issues alone. Studies show that a majority of college students change college major at least once during their college years. Therefore, it is important to pick a college or university that will offer you many appealing possibilities. Look for unique options such as study abroad, unusual academic calendars, or cooperative education plans which enable you to include several paid internships with your classwork, as ways of enhancing your education.

If you are undecided, relax and pick an academically-balanced institution which offers a range of majors and programs. Most colleges offer expert counseling to help the undecided student find a focus.



**CAMPUS LIFE:** Be sure that you consider what your experience will be like at a college beyond the classroom. In order to grow in all ways, you will want a reasonable balance between academic rigor and an active social life. Find out what is available in terms of extracurricular activities, athletics, and special interest groups. Does the community surrounding the college offer attractive outlets for students? Are students truly welcomed by the community? Is there an ethnic or religious community in which you can participate? What influence, do fraternities and sororities have on campus life?

Colleges will often require that you live in campus housing for one or more years. So, in considering social life, be sure to look carefully at the quality of life in the dormitories. Many colleges now offer residential-life options such as substance-free dorms and special interest floors for students who share academic, recreational or community service interests. Others will offer dormitory-based study assistance, computer facilities, and counseling services. Ask if housing is guaranteed to be available to returning students. If so, how are dormitory assignments made after the first year?

**COST:** Today's price-tag for a college education has made cost an important consideration for most students. At the same time, virtually all colleges work very hard to ensure that academically-qualified students from every economic circumstance can find the financial aid that will allow them to attend. In considering cost, look beyond the price-tag to financial assistance that may be available. Decide the value of a desired educational experience and how much sacrifice (usually in terms of work and loan) you are willing to make to obtain your goals. Work closely with the financial aid officers at the colleges to which you apply.

Two factors that are less obvious to many students, but very important in predicting the kind of experience you will have in college are:

**DIVERSITY:** You will learn much from your college classmates every day—in the classroom and in activities. Many graduates tell us that this was an important consideration in their college choice. Consider geographic, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of the student body as ways of assessing your future learning opportunities.

**RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES:** One of the best ways to measure the quality of a college or university and the satisfaction of its students is by learning the percentage of students who return after the first year and the percentage of entering students who remain to graduate. Comparatively good retention and graduation rates are indicators that:

- A college and a majority of its students are well-matched,
- Sufficient classes and academic programs are available, and that
- Responsible academic, social, and financial support systems exist for most students.



## DOING YOUR RESEARCH

Today, there are so many resources available to students looking at colleges that it is hard to know where start. If you are determined to do a thorough job of researching colleges you will want to use several of the following resources:

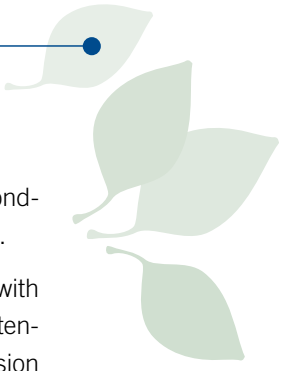
**COLLEGE GUIDEBOOKS:** Students often begin with one or two of the many college guides. Excellent and objective resources include *The College Handbook*, published by the College Board, and *Peterson's Guide to Four Year Colleges*, to name only two of the better known. These comprehensive references contain all of the data needed to answer most of your factual questions. Guides which address, in addition, quality of life issues and are based on surveys of enrolled students, offer subjective information. These include *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* and *The Insider's Guide* that is published by the Yale Daily News. If you want to get specific information about college majors, the College Board's *Index of College Majors* is a good starting place. Ratings of specific academic programs, though also subjective in nature, can be found in resources such as *Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges*. Most public and many school libraries will keep copies of these guidebooks on shelves.

Beware of rankings that appear to make sweeping comparisons of the quality of entire institutions. You should know that these rankings are often based on data reported by the colleges themselves, the accuracy of which has recently been questioned. Such rankings often weigh factors, like acceptance rate of applicants or average faculty salaries, which have little demonstrable relationship to the quality of an undergraduate's education. Remember that all colleges have academic programs of varying strength.

**COLLEGE-PRODUCED RESOURCES:** Colleges will shower you with publications once you show any interest. Glossy viewbooks give a brief glimpse of campus, majors, student life, and the admission process. Videos produced by many colleges will give you some sense of a college's campus if you can't visit. Don't ignore the college catalog as a source of information, if it is available (most likely in your school library). It is the definitive place to:

- look for application deadlines and requirements,
- see the breadth and depth of classes offered in your areas of interest,
- find a comprehensive list of scholarships offered, and
- discover the academic credentials of faculty members.

**COMPUTER RESOURCES:** The computer has had a significant impact on the type and availability of new college resources. In the past few years there has been a proliferation of computer software which is tailored to the college search process. Check to see if your school counseling office has available a college-search program to assist you in your college planning.



**PEOPLE RESOURCES:** Your school counselor will help you assess your qualifications for a range of postsecondary options and share the experiences of students from our school who have attended various institutions.

Plan to meet with college admission officers if they visit your school in the spring and fall. Be prepared with questions that go beyond information you can look up in guidebooks. Ask about student satisfaction, retention, campus safety, support services, etc. Feel free to follow up with letters or phone calls to this admission person.

Alumni of your school, who are attending or have graduated from colleges that you are considering, will be an excellent source of information. Because they are likely to have entered college with a background similar to yours, their experiences are particularly meaningful.

Talk to people who are working in careers to which you aspire. Ask for their recommendations about college programs and preparation paths. Many professional associations provide resources to students preparing for specific vocations.

**COLLEGE FAIRS AND OPEN HOUSES:** Watch the bulletin boards at your school for announcements of area-wide college fairs or open houses hosted on college campuses. The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) holds large college fairs in many large cities throughout the country. In addition to the general fairs, NACAC hosts college fairs specifically for students interested in visual and performing arts. You may find information about the dates and locations of NACAC fairs at [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org). At a fair you will have an opportunity to meet and talk with representatives from many colleges and universities, ask questions which are specific to your search, and get on mailing lists for applications.

**VISITS TO COLLEGE CAMPUSES:** The very best way to gain first-hand knowledge of a college or university is to visit. At a minimum, make some visits to colleges and universities in your local area, which vary in size and kind. This will give you a baseline for judging the kind of environment you are seeking. It is very important that you visit the college you think you will attend, before making a final commitment. Arrange through the admission office to attend classes and stay in a dorm, if possible.



2

SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

## ACTIVITY # 4: USING THE INTERNET TO RESEARCH COLLEGES

### *Opening Discussion:*

As early and as often as possible, students should make use of internet tools in researching:

- specific colleges,
- the college admission process,
- financial aid and scholarships.

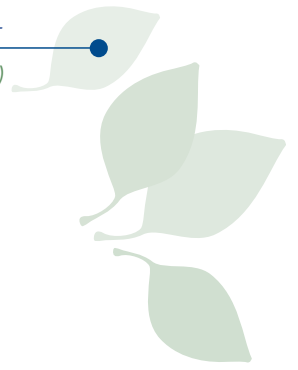
### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration**

You will want access to computers, if possible. Alternatively, you may want to photocopy examples of web pages which students may access for free.

### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute handout listing good, free Web sites for exploring colleges.
2. Explain the difference between free Web sites and those which charge fees for use.
3. If a computer with a projector is available, walk students through one of the Web sites. Alternatively, use photocopied web pages to talk about the kinds of information available on exploration Web sites.
4. Encourage students to use computers at school, at the library, at home to begin researching colleges and college matches.
5. If computers are available allow students to begin exploring. Circulate to be of assistance throughout this activity.



## INTERNET SITES FOCUSED ON COLLEGE EXPLORATION:

### COLLEGE INFORMATION

**CSO College Center:** [www.CSOCollegeCenter.org](http://www.CSOCollegeCenter.org)

**The College Board:** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**KnowHow2Go:** [www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org)

**Hobson's CollegeView:** [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)

**Peterson's:** [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

**The Common Application Online:** [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

**Colleges That Change Lives:** [www.ctcl.org](http://www.ctcl.org)

### FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

**Federal Student Aid:** <http://studentaid.ed.gov>

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)

**FAFSA4caster:** [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)

**CSS/PROFILE:** <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com>

**The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid:** [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

**FastWeb:** [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

**FindTuition:** [www.findtuition.com](http://www.findtuition.com)

**Sallie Mae:** [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)

### TESTING

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

**ACT Fee Waiver Instructions:** [www.actstudent.org/faq/answers/feewaiver.html](http://www.actstudent.org/faq/answers/feewaiver.html)

**SAT:** The College Board: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**SAT Fee Waiver Instructions:** [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenefees/feewaivers.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenefees/feewaivers.html)

**Preliminary SAT (PSAT):** [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html)

**Free Test Prep from Number2.com:** [www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)

**The Princeton Review:** [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

**Kaplan's Test Prep:** [www.kaptest.com](http://www.kaptest.com)

### ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH/POLICY

**National Association for College Admission Counseling:** [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)

**MemberPortal/United Negro College Fund (UNCF):** [www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org)

**Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities:** [www.hacu.net/hacu/Default\\_EN.asp](http://www.hacu.net/hacu/Default_EN.asp)

**National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education:** [www.nafeo.org](http://www.nafeo.org)

**First In The Family:** [www.firstinthefamily.org](http://www.firstinthefamily.org)

### ATHLETICS

**The Official NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse Web site:** <http://eligibilitycenter.org>

**Campus Champs:** [www.campuschamps.org](http://www.campuschamps.org)

**Athletic Aid:** [www.athleticaid.com](http://www.athleticaid.com)

### CAREERS

**Resource Links:** [www.careersprep.com/html/links.html](http://www.careersprep.com/html/links.html)

**The Occupational Outlook Handbook:** [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)

2

SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

## WRAP-UP

### *Keep in Mind:*

No two schools are exactly alike. Students need to know that each college presents a different opportunity and a new way to grow. Because colleges can differ vastly, students should be strongly encouraged to do their research of a variety of schools, and they should be aware that there are a multitude of resources designed to help them do so.

### *Homework:*

1. Instruct students to read the “Doing Your Research” handout prior to the next session.
2. Upon reading “Doing Your Research”, students should pick one or two of the resources mentioned on the handout to find out more information about 1 college that currently interests them. Public and school libraries are a good place to access computers and/or college guidebooks and college view books.
3. They should then record 3 pieces of interesting information about the college in their notebook and be prepared to discuss their findings with the group.



# 3

## SESSION 3: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: CURRICULUM AND TESTING

The purpose of this session is to impress upon the students that they must begin now in order to maximize their potential for admission to the appropriate colleges. They should understand they are “in the driver’s seat” and can truly chart their course for the future. By learning more about selecting a college prep course of study and learning about the types of standardized tests they should consider taking, students will be better prepared to apply to college when they reach senior year.

### *Objectives:*

By the end of this session, a student will

- understand all components necessary for a college prep curriculum
- have made a tentative course plan for high school
- understand how testing impacts admission, which tests to take, and when

### *Activities and Handouts:*

**Recap Activity:** Have students share some of the information that they discovered while researching a college through their “Doing Your Research” Activity.

**Activity #1:** What classes will you take to prepare for college?

Handouts: Your High School Classes will Open the Doors to College; What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?

**Activity #2:** Standardized Tests: What are they?

Handout: Standardized Test Information Sheet

**Activity #3:** Practicing the SAT and ACT

Handout: Practice SAT and ACT Questions and explanation of answers



3

SESSION 3: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: CURRICULUM AND TESTING

## ACTIVITY # 1: CURRICULUM PLANNING

### *Opening Discussion:*

Preparing for college entrance and success begins with extremely careful planning of high school course work. Every student needs to focus the bulk of energy during the high school years on classes which are truly “college-preparatory”. While it is certainly important to “enrich” a four-year schedule with classes in the fine and practical arts, colleges will look for the “meat and potatoes” classes in English, mathematics, foreign languages, laboratory sciences, and history/social sciences.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Your High School Classes will Open the Doors to College**

#### **What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?**

### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute handout: “Your High School Classes will Open the Doors to College”, and activity sheet: “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare for College?”
2. After allowing students time to read and consider the handout. Ask them to individually complete the activity sheet.
3. Divide students into small groups to compare responses.
4. Allow small groups to report to the larger group about the ways they are and aren’t on track for college. What deficiencies have been identified? What do individual students need to do to catch up?
5. Answer any questions that this activity may have brought forward.



## YOUR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES WILL OPEN THE DOORS TO COLLEGE

Because you are planning to go to college, it's important that you take the right classes in high school. That means that, beginning in 9th grade, the majority of your classes should be ones that will prepare you for admission to and, perhaps even more importantly, success in college. Most admission officers will tell you that the first thing they look at is your choice of classes, even before they look at grades. When it comes time to apply to college you want to make sure that you meet the admission criteria of ALL colleges in which you are interested. Always remember that it is much better to be “overprepared” than “underprepared”.

### Here's what you need by the end of your senior year in order to meet the admission expectations at a majority of colleges:

- 4 full years of English classes. This includes courses in which you study writing and courses in which you read literature. Colleges know that you need to be able to write well in nearly every career. You need to be able to read and analyze, and you need to develop strong communication skills!
- 4 full years of Math classes. Students who take math in each year of high school are far more successful in college than students taking only three years. Math is the tool that you will use for many other classes, especially those in science. Your math classes should include at least four of the following six classes, taken in this order:
  - Pre-algebra
  - Algebra
  - Precalculus
  - Geometry
  - Algebra II and/or trigonometry
  - Calculus

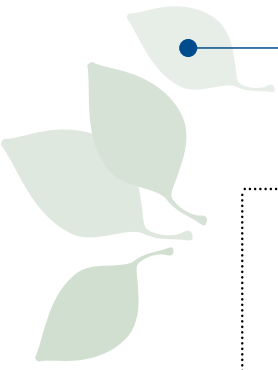
Never “skip” a year of math in high school, because you will lose your momentum. If you do not take math in your senior year, you will find that the math classes required in college will be very difficult!

- 3-4 years of laboratory science classes. You will have the strongest background if you have taken at least one year each of:
  - Biology
  - Chemistry
  - Physics
- 2 years, at a minimum, of social sciences. Most college freshmen studied World History and American History in high school. Other social science options include:
  - Government
  - Sociology
  - Geography
  - Psychology
- 2-4 years of foreign language. More and more colleges are requiring a minimum of 2 years of language study while in high school, as an admission criterion. Because many colleges require students to study a second language, it is important that you expose yourself to the study of languages while in high school.

A small number of colleges require one year of visual or performing art prior to admission. Participation in these classes throughout high school, can help you to develop a “special talent” that will make you a highly qualified applicant.

As a summary, most colleges require students to meet certain college prep curriculum standards. But just meeting the minimum is not necessarily the best way to prepare for college. Strong preparation means going beyond the minimum—allowing you to start your college career in college-level courses, not remedial courses which are designed to help you catch up or review high school material—for NO CREDIT!

**SPECIAL NOTE FOR ATHLETES:** Work with your counselor and coaches to make sure that your classes meet the standards of the NCAA Clearinghouse. Go to [www.naaclearinghouse.net](http://www.naaclearinghouse.net) for more information.



## WHAT CLASSES WILL YOU TAKE TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE:

Subject	Minimum college preparation	State universities and other selective college requirements	Highly selective college recommendations (Honors & AP levels, when possible)	My courses to date	I need to take
English (with an emphasis on reading and writing)	4 years	4 years	4 years		
Math	3 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra	4 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra	4 years, including algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra		
Social Studies	2-3 years, including 1 year of U.S. History and 1-2 years from other social sciences	2-3 years, including 1 year of U.S. History and 1-2 years from other social sciences	2-3 years, including 1 year of U.S. History and 1-2 years from other social sciences		
Science	2 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry or Physics	2-3 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry or Physics	2-3 years of lab science: Biology, Chemistry or Physics		
Foreign Language	2 years of the same foreign language	2-4 years of the same foreign language	4 years of the same foreign language		

## ACTIVITY # 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

### *Opening Discussion:*

Since standardized testing is required for admission to many colleges and is used to qualify for many scholarships, all students should be sure to take the SAT or ACT at least once. Preparation is recommended for both tests and both companies offer free materials to help with that preparation (online information is available through [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) and [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) or through bulletins available in the guidance office). The more a student reads and the more s/he is familiar with the test, the better the results will be. Many students will have the ability to take the PLAN and/or PSAT through their schools and should take advantage of that opportunity. The ACT also offers Explore, a college readiness test aimed at 8th and 9th grade students.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Standardized Tests**

### *Instructions:*

1. Ask the students to look over the Standardized Tests handout and write down any questions they might have.
2. Once they have each had an opportunity to read and think about the handout, ask them to share their questions.
3. If there is a computer available, show the students the College Board and ACT sites and particularly the site for registering for the SAT and ACT.
4. If you don't have computer access, then try to print out the College Board and ACT "homepages" to show students what they look like.



## STANDARDIZED TESTS

Their names can sometimes sound like alphabet soup, but the standardized tests you will take in high school are important for college. Some schools require different tests, so you want to make sure to check with each one about their requirements. Here are the four main tests you may have to take if you want to apply to most colleges:

### ACT TESTS

#### EXPLORE

The Explore helps students in 8th and 9th grades to plan their high school careers. The test will help to discover appropriate high school courses, prepare for the ACT or find a career direction.

##### ***When do I take the test?***

The EXPLORE is taken in 8th and 9th grades.

##### ***How do I register?***

The EXPLORE is usually administered by your school district. See your guidance counselor for more information or go to [www.actstudent.org/explore](http://www.actstudent.org/explore).

##### ***What is the test's structure?***

The EXPLORE consists of four 30-minute sections of English, math, reading, and science.

#### PLAN

The PLAN is the pre-ACT test taken to help students estimate how well they will do on the ACT and, in some cases, can have bearing on scholarship. It is a comprehensive guidance resource that helps students measure their current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for the remaining years of high school and post-graduation years.

##### ***When do I take the test?***

The PLAN is taken during the tenth grade.

##### ***How do I register?***

The PLAN is usually administered by high schools. See your guidance counselor for more information or go to [www.actstudent.org/plan](http://www.actstudent.org/plan).

##### ***What is the test's structure?***

PLAN is a four part multiple-choice test structured very similarly to the ACT with sections covering English, mathematics, reading and science.

For more information about PLAN, talk to your high school counselor or visit [www.actstudent.org/plan](http://www.actstudent.org/plan).



## ACT

This standardized test is designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. It often is used for college admission decisions, and all U.S. colleges and universities accept ACT results. The ACT can also be used to determine NCAA eligibility.

### ***When do I take the test?***

The ACT is offered usually six times during a given school year. Students generally take the test first during the spring of their junior year and/ or during the fall of their senior year. It is usually best to take it as early as possible, as you may want to take the test again to get your best score possible.

### ***When and how do I register?***

A registration packet should be available at your high school, but you may also register online at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Be mindful of the registration deadlines for each test, as they are generally one month in advance, but it is suggested that you register at least six weeks prior to the test. Fee waivers are available for students who qualify for financial assistance, so inquire with the ACT directly.

### ***What is the test's structure?***

The ACT consists of four multiple-choice tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science, as well as an optional writing test.

### ***How is it scored?***

Each subject is scored 1-36 for a composite score, the highest being a 36 overall.

All pertinent ACT testing date information, fee information, registration information and all other questions can be answered by visiting [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

## *College Board/SAT Tests*

### PSAT

The PSAT (Preliminary SAT) is a two-part, exam that is very similar to the SAT. Not to be taken lightly, the PSAT is generally the first indicator colleges and universities use for scholarship purposes and placement.

### ***When do I take the test?***

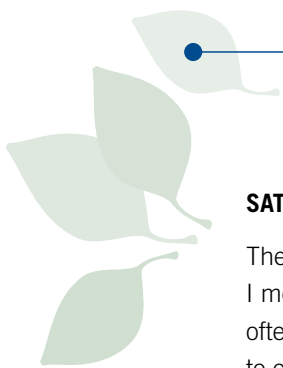
Most people take the PSAT in the fall of their junior year in high school. In addition, some students choose to take it during their sophomore year, which is strongly encouraged. However, scores on the PSAT during your junior year are used to determine National Merit Scholars who qualify for merit-based scholarships distributed throughout the United States

### ***How do I register?***

You must sign up for the PSAT at your high school. The PSAT is administered during October of every school year. There is a fee associated with taking the PSAT, but there are fee waiver opportunities for certain students and some schools pay for their students to take the test.

### ***What is the test's structure?***

The PSAT consists of two 25-minute verbal sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing skills section.



## **SAT**

The SAT is one of two standardized tests used by colleges as part of their admissions requirements. The SAT I measures verbal, written, and math reasoning skills and is used for admission at most colleges. The SAT is often used to determine eligibility for scholarships and is required by the NCAA for those athletes who hope to compete in college.

The SAT Subject Tests (formerly SAT II) consist of more than 20 subject areas and are achievement tests designed to measure subject-area knowledge. Many colleges use the Subject Tests for admissions, for course placement, and to advise students about course selection, but only some require them

### ***When do I take the test?***

The SAT and Subject Tests are administered every October, November, December, February, March, May and June of each school year. Most students take the SAT during the second semester of their junior year and/or the first semester of the senior year. The best rule of thumb with the SAT is the earlier and more often the better.

### ***When and how do I register?***

A registration packet should be available at your high school, but you may also register online at **www.collegeboard.com**. Keep in mind the registration deadlines for each test, as they are generally one month in advance, but it is suggested that you register at least six weeks prior to the test. While there are costs associated with taking the test, students who require financial assistance may qualify for fee waivers. (**www.collegeboard.com/satfeewaiver**)

### ***What's the test's structure?***

The SAT is 3 hour and 45 minute test with ten sections consisting of critical reading, math, writing, and one experimental section which is masked to look like a regular section. Extended time and other accommodations are available for students who qualify. For more information, see your guidance counselor.

### ***How is it scored?***

Scores on each section range from 200-800 points. The scores from each section are combined, and the highest possible combined score is 2400.

All pertinent SAT testing date information, fee information, registration information and all other questions can be answered by visiting **www.collegeboard.com**.

## *Other tests*

The Test of English As a Second Language (TOEFL) tests your ability to communicate in English and is a test for students for whom English is not a first language. The test measures skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing in English and requires you to combine two or more of these skills to respond to a question. It is usually an internet based exam given in designated test centers by appointment. Paper based tests are only offered in remote areas. For more information, see your guidance counselor or go to **www.ets.org**.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Not all colleges require standardized testing although they often do require additional essays and or recommendations. For a list of those colleges, go to **www.fairtest.org**.

## 3

## SESSION 3: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: CURRICULUM AND TESTING

## ACTIVITY # 3: PRACTICE SAT & ACT QUESTIONS

### *Opening Discussion:*

Standardized tests aren't fun for anyone. But the name of the game is "practice." With practice you will become more comfortable with the test and score better when it comes time to take the real test.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Sample SAT and ACT Questions**

**Sample SAT Questions:** Explanations

**Sample ACT Questions:** Explanations

### *Instructions:*

1. Divide the students into groups of three and tell them that they will be receiving three practice SAT/ACT questions.
2. Tell the groups that they have three minutes to find the answer to the questions and will receive 5 points for each right answer.
3. The group with the most points will get to explain how they solved the problems. Let them see how closely their explanation comes to the one provided by the College Board/ACT.

**NOTE:** Depending upon the academic level of the students, the counselor may want to find more difficult questions by going to the College Board web site and looking at "Practice Questions" in the section called "Prepare for the SAT." The web site also posts a "Question of the Day" every day which is good practice for those students who have access to a computer. Practice ACT questions are located at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

### *Wrap-Up Discussion:*

Remind students that practice is the best way to do their best on any test. If desired, bring sample questions to each subsequent session for this group. With the close of the topic of testing, remind the students that tests are only a small part of the college application and that in the following sessions they will learn about other important aspects of the application process, like the importance of extracurricular activities.



## SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS:

### *Sentence Completion:*

The sentence below has two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five sets of words labeled A through E. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

Hoping to ----- the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be ----- to both labor and management.

- (A) enforce . . . useful
- (B) end . . . divisive
- (C) overcome . . . unattractive
- (D) extend . . . satisfactory
- (E) resolve . . . acceptable

### *Math Question #1:*

A special lottery is to be held to select the student who will live in the only deluxe room in a dormitory. There are 100 seniors, 150 juniors, and 200 sophomores who applied. Each senior's name is placed in the lottery 3 times; each junior's name, 2 times; and each sophomore's name, 1 time. What is the probability that a senior's name will be chosen?

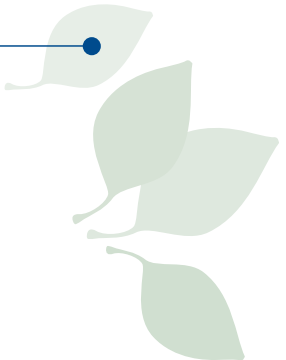
- (A)  $\frac{1}{8}$
- (B)  $\frac{2}{9}$
- (C)  $\frac{2}{7}$
- (D)  $\frac{3}{8}$
- (E)  $\frac{1}{2}$

### *Math Question #2:*

$$7-4x = 5$$

$$8x-3 = 1$$

What value of  $x$  satisfies both of the equations above?



# SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS EXPLANATIONS

## Explanation of Sentence Completion:

One way to answer a sentence completion question with two words missing is to focus first on just one of the two blanks. If one of the words in an answer choice is logically wrong, then you can eliminate the entire choice from consideration.

- Look at the first blank in the example above. Would it make sense to say that “negotiators” who have “proposed a compromise” were hoping to enforce or extend the “dispute”? No, so neither (A) nor (D) can be the correct answer.
- Now you can focus on the second blank. Would the “negotiators” have proposed a compromise that they believed would be divisive or unattractive to “both labor and management”? No, so (B) and (C) can be eliminated, and only choice (E) remains.
- Always check your answer by reading the entire sentence with your choice filled in. Does it make sense to say “Hoping to resolve the dispute, the negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be acceptable to both labor and management”? Yes.

**Correct answer: (E)**

## Explanation of Math Question #1:

To determine the probability that a senior’s name will be chosen, you must determine the total number of seniors’ names that are in the lottery and divide this number by the total number of names in the lottery. Since each senior’s name is placed in the lottery 3 times, there are  $3 \cdot 100 = 300$  seniors’ names. Likewise, there are  $2 \cdot 150 = 300$  juniors’ names and  $1 \cdot 200 = 200$  sophomores’ names in the lottery. The probability that a senior’s name will be chosen is

$$\frac{300}{300 + 300 + 200} = \frac{300}{800} = \frac{3}{8}$$

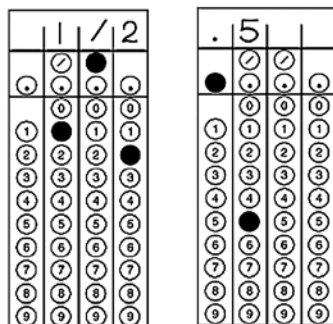
**Correct Answer: (D)**

## Answer to Math Question #2:

OR

Correct Answer:

$\frac{1}{2}$  or .5



## SAMPLE ACT QUESTIONS

### Passage I:

Measles is an extremely contagious viral infection spread by the respiratory route. Figure 1 shows the course of measles from time of exposure to recovery from the infection.

After recovery from measles, the infected individual develops immunity or resistance to reinfection. Figure 1 shows the development of immunity indicated by the antibody level.

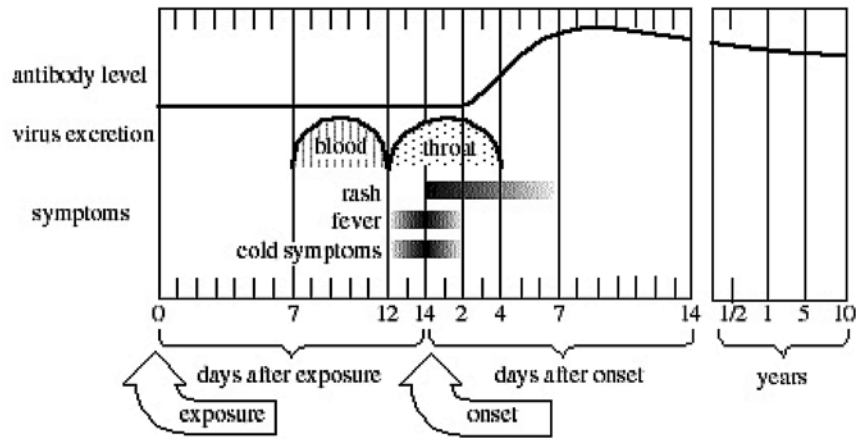
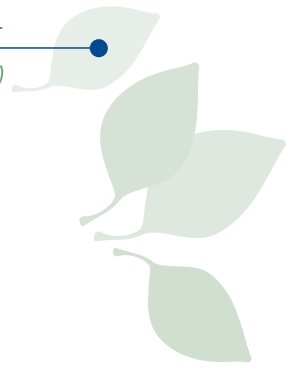


Figure 1

Figure 1 adapted from D. M. McLean, *Virology in Health Care*. ©1980 by Williams & Wilkins.

Based on the information presented in the passage and in Figure 1, would it be possible to determine that a person had immunity against the measles virus 6 months after exposure?

- Yes; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be elevated 6 months after exposure.
- Yes; the virus would still be present in the respiratory tract to protect against reinfection.
- No; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be undetectable 6 months after exposure.
- No; the virus would no longer be present in the blood to protect against reinfection.



## SAMPLE ACT QUESTIONS: EXPLANATIONS

### The best answer is A.

Figure 1 depicts the progression of the measles from time of exposure until 10 years after exposure. Figure 1 also indicates the antibody level in the body.

- A. Yes; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be elevated 6 months after exposure.

Correct. Figure 1 indicates that 6 months after exposure, the antibody level is elevated. Since this level is not elevated prior to infection, it would be possible to determine that a person had immunity against the measles virus 6 months after exposure by measuring the antibody level and determining that it was elevated.

- B. Yes; the virus would still be present in the respiratory tract to protect against reinfection.

Incorrect. Figure 1 indicates that the virus excretion is present in the throat 2 to 3 weeks after exposure. However, the virus excretion is not present in the throat after 6 months.

- C. No; the level of protective antibodies against measles would be undetectable 6 months after exposure.

Incorrect. Figure 1 indicates that the antibody level remains elevated for at least 10 years. Thus, the protective antibodies against measles would be detectable 6 months after exposure, making C incorrect.

- D. No; the virus would no longer be present in the blood to protect against reinfection.

Incorrect. Even if the virus was no longer present in the blood, other factors could be measured to determine that a person had immunity against the measles virus 6 months after exposure. For example, the antibody level remains elevated for at least 10 years.



3

SESSION 3: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: CURRICULUM AND TESTING

## WRAP-UP

### *Keep in Mind:*

There is no day better than today to start preparing for college. As early as 9th grade, students should begin a college prep program, choosing classes that will not only make them stand out during the application process, but will prepare them for college level courses. Additionally, students need to prepare for and take the SAT or ACT, as these tests are a mandatory criterion at most colleges.

### *Homework:*

1. Inform students that they have already begun the first stage of their homework with their “What Classes Will You Take to Prepare You for College?” handouts.
2. Instruct students to plan what they think their schedules should look like next year based on the classes that they still need/would like to take. Although the assignment only calls for a plan for one year, students may plan until the end of high school if they would like.
3. Additionally, students are to incorporate into their schedules standardized testing. Which test(s) should they be focusing on next year (PLAN, PSAT, ACT,SAT) and when should they take it?
4. While students should refer back to the handouts that they received during this session to assist with completion of this assignment, encourage students to talk with their own school counselors (when possible) to assess and plan their options for the next school year.



## 4

**SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Students often believe that their grades and test scores are all that colleges look for in determining admission for an applicant, but they need to understand that in many cases, their extracurricular interests and talents will also be an important (and sometimes key) factor in the final admission decision and may also lead to scholarships. In this session, students will learn about the ways that extracurricular activities and other factors might impact their decisions about colleges. The session will end with the “Great Sorting Game” that should help the students understand that their GPA is not the only factor that colleges will be considering (and it’s fun!)

*Objectives:*

By the end of this session, students will

- understand how extracurricular activities can improve opportunities for college admission, enhance the college experience, and lead to future jobs
- begin a résumé
- examine a college bound calendar for high school
- understand how these pieces fit together through playing “The Great Sorting Game”

*Activities and Handouts:*

**Recap Activity:** Have students pair up and share the schedules that they created for next school year. Ask students to compare their plan (or their previous courses) to their partner’s.

**Activity #1:** Translating Interests into Activities

Handouts: Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2; Interests & Related Activities

**Activity #2:** Building Your Résumé and Getting Involved

Handout: Activities Résumé

**Activity #3:** Understanding the Big Picture

Handout: College Planning Checklist

**Activity #4:** Putting It All Together

Handout: The Great Sorting Game



## 4

## SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY # 1: TRANSLATING INTERESTS INTO ACTIVITIES

A student's extracurricular interests (in or out of school) can often be translated into more formal activities. This exercise will help students brainstorm clubs, organizations, teams, etc. that they might want to join. In the following activity, they will be encouraged to begin a résumé (or list) of the activities in which they are currently involved with and to add to that list each time they enter into a new activity.

### *Opening Discussion:*

Remind students that colleges want active and engaged students who are involved in their community and that scholarship organizations also look for students who are involved in activities.

Did you know that your extracurricular interests will:

- enable you to discover your talents and develop your skills?
- help build confidence and encourage you to see relationships and connections?
- lead to college majors and future employment as well as internships and volunteer opportunities?
- enhance your application to college and your chances for admission as well as scholarships?

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2**

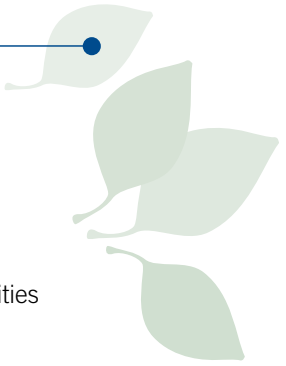
#### **Interests & Related Activities**

### *Instructions:*

1. Begin by asking the students to complete the “Personal College Counseling Questionnaire 2” as fully as possible.
2. Once they have completed it, ask the students to find a partner and together decide how they would each fill out the “Interests & Related Activities” chart that will help them to see how their interests might relate to school or community activities and to future majors and/or careers. They may need to do some “brainstorming” to think of majors and careers. Remind them that there are no “wrong” answers here and that they may have to think creatively in order to figure out how their interests would translate into something more.
3. Once students have had a chance to complete their charts, ask them to “introduce” their partner to the group, so that all can benefit from the observations and questions that may arise with this exercise.







## INTERESTS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

This table should help you to organize your interests and talents and decide how they might relate to activities you could pursue in or out of school and how they might lead to a major in college or a possible career.

List your talents and/or interests in the first column and discuss with your partner what activities you might be able to join that would fit those interests and put them in the second column.

Finally, discuss possible college majors or careers that you might be able to pursue that would fit those interests and talents.

Interests and Talents (i.e., writing)	Related Activities (in and out of school) (i.e., yearbook)	Possible Major and/or Career (i.e., journalism/newspaper reporter)

## 4

## SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY # 2: BUILDING YOUR RÉSUMÉ & GETTING INVOLVED

### *Opening Discussion:*

A résumé is a list of your experience, skills, and educational background, and is an important piece of the college application. It allows colleges to learn more about you outside of your classroom work and academic performance. Your résumé should be a “living document” that you add to throughout high school until it’s time to apply to colleges in your senior year.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Activities Résumé**

**Resources List (optional)**—the facilitator may want to create a list of extracurricular activities and volunteer opportunities in the school and community, as well as a list of local scholarship opportunities and resources, to share with the students.

### *Instructions:*

1. Ask students to fill out the “Activities Résumé.”
2. They may add to the list, in another color, the activities they might do as they go through high school.
3. The students should be encouraged to keep a copy of the résumé in a safe place since it can be used not only for completing applications, but also as an informative piece to share with their guidance counselor and teachers who may be writing recommendations for them in the future.
4. In addition to their “Activities Résumé,” the facilitator should remind students to keep a record of any awards or honors (and the date received) in a file folder or to consider creating an electronic portfolio.



## ACTIVITIES RÉSUMÉ

	Dates From/To	Time Spent		Responsibility / Accomplishments
		Hours per week/month	Total Hours	
A. School and Athletic Activities				
B. Volunteer Service/ Community or Family Activities				
C. Paid Work (after school or summer job)				
D. Summer/ Enrichment Pro- grams (Upward Bound, Bridge Builders, etc.)				

4

SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY # 3: UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE

### *Opening Discussion:*

It is important for students to understand that each year in high school will count towards preparing for college. They should be aware of important events in order to be sure that they are taking advantage of every opportunity to be ready for applying to college by the fall of their senior year.

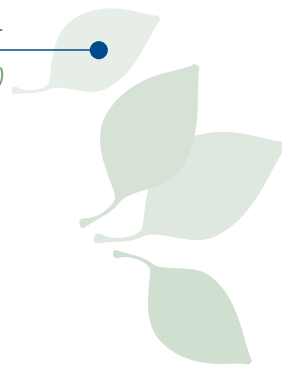
### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **College Planning Checklists—Grades 9–11**

### *Instructions:*

1. Give each of the students a copy of the “College Planning Checklist” and ask them to read it carefully, putting check marks where appropriate.
2. After giving them time to thoroughly read the Checklist, allow time for questions.

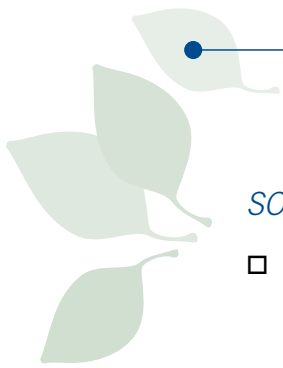




# COLLEGE PLANNING CHECKLIST

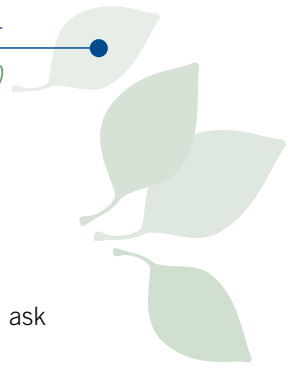
## FRESHMAN

- Plan a challenging program of classes to take.
  - The courses you take in high school show colleges what kind of goals you set for yourself. Are you signing up for advanced classes, honors sections, or accelerated sequences? Are you choosing electives that really stretch your mind and help you develop new abilities? Or are you doing just enough to get by? Colleges will be more impressed by respectable grades in challenging courses than by outstanding grades in easy ones.
  - Keep in mind the courses that colleges expect you to have completed for admissions; your schedule should consist of at least 4 college preparatory classes per year, including:
    - 4 years of English
    - 4 years of math (through algebra II, trigonometry or higher)
    - 2-4 years of foreign language
    - 3-4 years of laboratory science
    - 2-4 years of history/social studies
    - 1 year of fine arts
    - 1 year of electives from the above list
- Create a file of important documents and notes.
  - Copies of report cards, lists of awards and honors, and lists of school and community activities in which you are involved, including both paid and volunteer work, and descriptions of what you do.
- Get involved with academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, and science.
  - Keep in mind that learning doesn't happen solely in the classroom.
- Stay active in clubs, activities, and sports that you enjoy.
  - Colleges look at more than just your academic record for admissions. It's important that you demonstrate your abilities outside of the classroom too.



## SOPHOMORES

- Learn what resources are available to help you plan for college by meeting with your school's college or guidance counselor. Ask about catalogs, guidebooks, college search programs, and college information Web sites.
  
- Begin your college search and visits.
  - Create a list of colleges and universities in which you are interested and discuss the list with your parents and school counselor.
  - Find out about the different types of schools. Decide which characteristics are most important to you, such as the size of the school, distance from home, cost, and extracurricular activities.
  
- Continue extracurricular activities, as admissions officers look at students' extracurricular activities when considering them for admission.
  
- Continue participation in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, and science.
  
- Update your file of important documents and notes
  
- Prepare for standardized testing
  - Ask your counselor about taking the ACT PLAN or PSAT test in the fall. These are valuable tests to help you prepare for the actual ACT and SAT, two college entrance exams, which you can take during your junior year.
  - Review PLAN or PSAT test results with your parents and school counselor.
  - Many students take SAT Subject Tests for college admissions as early as sophomore year. These tests help you show colleges your proficiency in different subject areas.
  
- Sign up for junior year courses keeping in mind that you will want to challenge yourself with tougher courses. It will pay off in the long run not only by making you smarter, but by impressing colleges and helping you win scholarships.
  
- Talk to your counselor about registering for AP courses next year. AP, or Advanced Placement, courses grant college credit for achievement in exams during high school covering many different college-level subjects.



## JUNIORS

### August

- Start your year off right by talking with your guidance counselor about the year ahead. Be sure to ask about test dates for the PSAT, ACT, and SAT. You'll need to register up to six weeks ahead of time.
- Start investigating sources for financial aid. Take note of scholarship deadlines and plan accordingly.
- Starting developing a résumé—a record of your accomplishments, activities, and work experiences. This will be an important part of your college application.
- If you don't participate in many activities outside of class, now is the time to sign up. Consider clubs at schools, team sports, or even an after school job.

### September/October

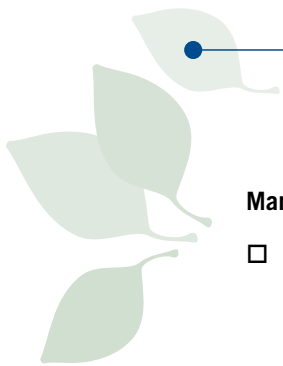
- Take the PSAT. Even if you took the test during your sophomore year, taking the test this year will count towards National Merit Scholar consideration and will give you a better predictor for the SAT you take later this year or next.
- Sign up for ACT or SAT prep courses or use free test preparation resources on the Internet. If you can't find the best Web sites, ask your counselor. You will want to take the test at least once in the spring and again next fall during your senior year.
- Sign up for the ACT and SAT, if you haven't already.

### December

- PSAT and ACT PLAN test results should be coming in. Review the results to learn more about your strengths and weaknesses and discuss them with your parents and counselor.

### January/February

- Meet with your guidance counselor again to develop your senior schedule. Ask how you can improve your college preparation.
- Talk to a counselor or teacher about registering for AP courses during your senior year.
- Register for a spring offering of the SAT or ACT
- Think about registering for SAT Subject Tests this spring. The final registration deadline for taking the test this academic year will be in April.



### March/April

- Begin taking a more serious look at colleges and universities you are interested in attending. Make a file and gather information about academics, financial aid, and campus life to put in it. Go to college fairs and open houses and learn as much as you can from the Internet about schools.
  
- Begin planning college visits. Spring break is a good time because you can observe a campus when classes are going on. Even if they are not campuses that you think you would attend, it is important to get exposure to college campuses and the college experience.
  
- Think about lining up a summer job, internship, or co-op.
  
- If you are in AP courses, get ready for the AP exams next month.
  
- Develop a preliminary list of colleges that interest you. Write or call them to request a viewbook and additional information.
  
- Take a look at some college applications and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.

### May

- AP Examinations are given in high schools nationally this month. Make sure you are signed up and know the dates and times for your exams.
  
- Make a list of teachers, counselors, employers, and other adults who you might ask to write letters of recommendation for your college applications.

4

SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY # 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER— THE GREAT SORTING GAME

### *Opening Discussion:*

The Great Sorting Game engages students in an enjoyable mock-admissions simulation. The purpose is to help students understand the many factors that are weighted in admission decisions. The game should generate discussion that will summarize many of the issues presented so far.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **The Great Sorting Game**

### *Instructions:*

1. Instructions and game materials are in the pages that follow.





## THE GREAT SORTING GAME

(Copyright 2003, Mary Lee Hoganson)

### *A PARTICIPATORY DEMONSTRATION OF HOW SELECTIVE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS WORKS (SORT OF)*

#### **Getting started with play:**

Find 9 volunteers to be admission candidates. Secure an additional volunteer to play the “Director of Admission.” It will be that person who reads the qualities and tells students whether to move up or down in the competition. Hand out the GPAs in RANDOM order and then instruct volunteers to organize themselves in GPA order from highest to lowest. (This is generally a couple of minutes of comedy relief because players have trouble getting organized. This is part of the fun.)

#### **Scenario of play:**

The group of non-volunteers is told that they are the Admission Committee from “Highly Prestigious University” (or you pick a better and funnier name). The committee is at the very end of the admission cycle and still has 9 great applicants from which it can only admit 3 students. All have very appealing qualities, but there is simply not enough room in the class for all 9. Before them they see the candidates. Point out that they are in standing in GPA order from highest to lowest. Also emphasize that all are great candidates and so the committee will have to decide based upon personal qualities and qualifications. Point out that, if the committee were to decide only on academics, the three with the highest GPAs would get in.

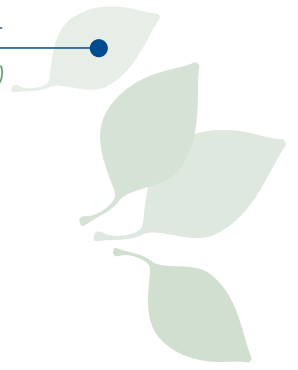
The personal qualities/qualifications are then read and the volunteers are asked to exchange places (move up and down in the order) based upon what is read. (One very important note to make this work: if more than one student is moving down at the same time, the lowest student must move first and visa versa—if more than one student is moving up, the highest student must move first.) You may choose to alter the qualities/qualifications and the weight given to each.

Stop after each quality read in order to discuss why this helped or hindered the candidate. As an example: you may ask, “why do you think it might not be helpful to declare your major as pre-med or psychology?” After reading the “Greek Major” quality, point out that many selective colleges have Classics Professors who are covered with cobwebs and are really hoping to get a few kids in their classes. Stop after the Early Decision qualification to discuss how this may play into a decision by a college. In this way, it is more than reading the qualities. It is a way to generate discussion.

#### **The ending:**

After all qualities have been read and candidates have been “sorted”, have the candidates turn their GPA sheets around to reveal the GPA to reveal to the audience. Read through the GPAs, pointing out the new order and note that the top three, new sorted, candidates are going to be admitted.

You might choose to have a small prize—like pieces of candy to thank the volunteers.

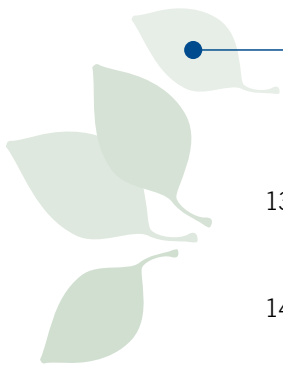


## THE GREAT SORTING GAME

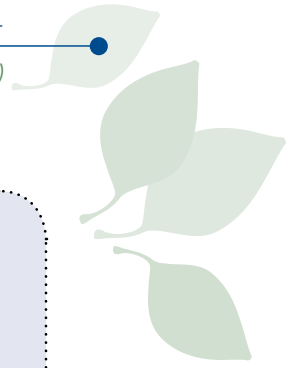
(Copyright 2003 Mary Lee Hoganson)

*Qualities, which are read, and places to move up and down in the line:*

1. IF YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM +2
2. IF YOU PLAY THE OBOE OR VIOLA +1
3. IF YOU CLEARLY STATED THAT THIS COLLEGE WAS YOUR FIRST CHOICE BY MAKING AN EARLY DECISION APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT +2
4. IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PSYCHOLOGY OR PREMED -1
5. IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS GREEK +2
6. IF YOU DO NOT KNOW ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS WELL AND HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -2
7. IF, WHEN YOU WORD-PROCESSED YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY, YOU FORGOT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE YOU WERE APPLYING TO, -4
8. IF YOU ARE A LEGACY +2
9. IF YOU DID NOT WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION -1
10. IF THE TOPIC OF YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY WAS “WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS” -1
11. IF YOU WROTE THE ESSAY OF THE YEAR—THE ONE THAT WAS PASSED AROUND THE ENTIRE ADMISSION OFFICE IT WAS SO REMARKABLE + 3
12. IF YOU PLAGERIZED AN AP AMERICAN HISTORY PAPER AND GOT CAUGHT—SIT DOWN, YOU’RE OUT OF THE COMPETITION ENTIRELY

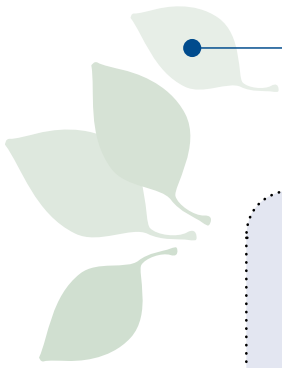


13. IF YOU WILL BE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ATTEND COLLEGE +2
14. IF YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS +2
15. IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES -3
16. IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT +1
17. IF YOU ARE AN EAGLE SCOUT +2
18. IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE +2, AND IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE AND TOOK SECOND-PLACE AT REGIONALS IN YOUR SPORT MOVE UP ONE MORE (A TOTAL OF 3)
19. IF YOU GOT A “D” IN AN ACADEMIC COURSE AT THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR -3
20. IF YOU CAME TO THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE (AND IN THE CASE OF THE STUDENT WHO JUST GOT THE “D”, EXPLAINED THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES) +1
21. IF YOU ARE A LEGAL RESIDENT OF IDAHO +3
22. IF YOU NEVER GAVE YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN WRITING YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -1
23. IF YOUR LAST NAME IS TRUMP—THE NAME ON THE COLLEGE LIBRARY IS TRUMP—AND IT’S NOT A COINCIDENCE, MOVE ALL THE WAY TO THE FRONT AND STAY THERE



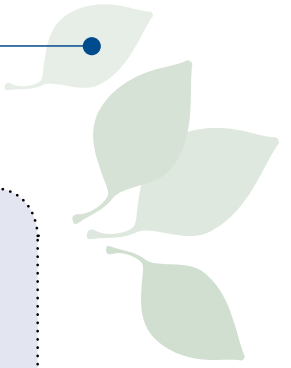
# 4.0

- You did not write the optional essay for your college application
  - You have participated in no extracurricular activities
- You are a legal resident of Idaho



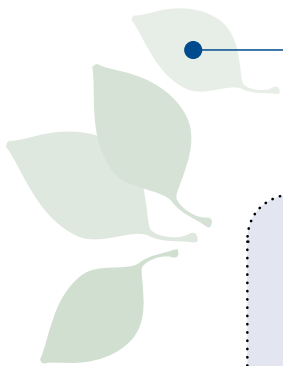
## 3.9

- Your intended major is Pre-Med
- You wrote your essay on “What I learned from playing sports”
- You participated in an enriching summer program between your junior and senior years



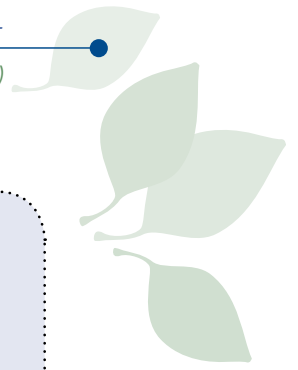
## 3.8

- You have taken an exceptionally strong academic program
  - Your intended major is psychology
- When you typed your college essay, you forgot to change the name of the college to which you were applying
- You plagiarized an AP American History paper and got caught



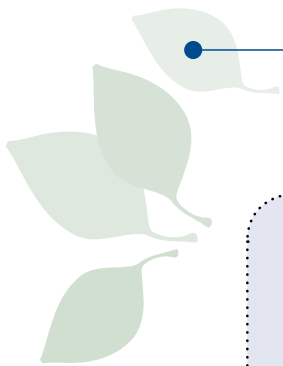
## 3.7

- You play the viola
- You do not know any of your teachers well and had trouble finding someone to write your college recommendation
- You did not write the optional essay for your college application
- You never gave your counselor any personal information for use in writing your college recommendation



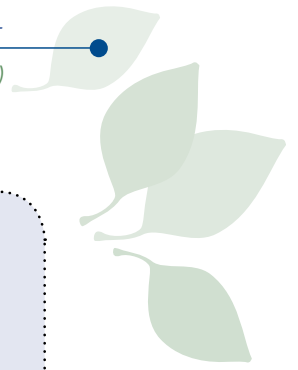
## 3.6

- You clearly stated that this college was your first choice by making an early decision application and commitment
  - The topic of your college essay was “What I Learned from Playing Sports”
- You have been involved in a significant community service project or trip
- You attended the college information session at your high school and introduced yourself to the college representative



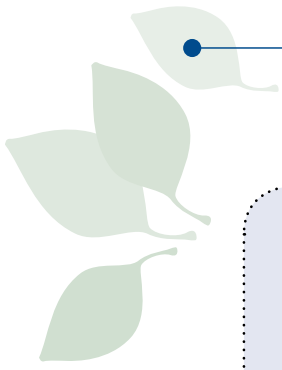
## 3.5

- You play the oboe
- You plan to major in Greek
- You are a legacy
- You participated in an enriching summer program between your junior and senior years



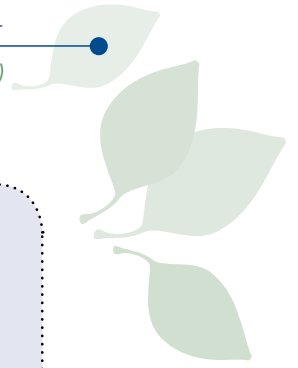
## 3.4

- You are a varsity athlete
- You have taken an exceptionally strong academic program
- You will be the first in your family to attend college
- You have been involved in a significant community service project



## 3.3

- You wrote the essay of the year—the one that was passed around the entire admission office it was so remarkable
- You are a varsity athlete and took second-place at regional competition in your sport
- You got a “D” in an academic course at the end of your junior year
- You attended the college information session at your high school and introduced yourself to the college representative (and offered an explanation of your “D” grade)



## 3.2

- You are a legacy
- You are an Eagle Scout
- Your last name is Trump—the name on the library is Trump—and it's not a coincidence

4

SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

## WRAP-UP

### *Keep in Mind:*

Colleges are not looking for any one type of student. However, all schools look for an accomplished student who brings a lot to the table. While colleges search for truly well-rounded students, they do take into account that grades might not be as high for a student who is committed to many activities outside of the classroom, and vice versa. Students should continue to keep a record of all of the activities that they do outside of school and should also keep in mind how those activities have shaped who they are and will make them better candidates at their chosen colleges.

### *Homework:*

1. Instruct students that they will be writing a two-paragraph essay on “The Ideal Student.”
2. In the first paragraph, the students are to pretend that they are a college admission counselor reviewing student applications. They should write what they are looking for in the ideal student. Remind students that admission counselors don’t just look for good grades but take many things into account.
3. In the second paragraph, students should write how they ARE or CAN BECOME that ideal student. Here, students should focus on actions that they have or will take in the future.
4. Remind students that each paragraph should be 5 or more sentences.



## 5

**SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS**

The purpose of this session is to build on the knowledge students have gained about themselves and colleges in the previous sessions and to expand upon the information from Session II about the various ways they can find out about colleges and begin to understand which colleges might be the best “match” for them. The students will look at their résumés in relation to the kinds of information they are gathering about colleges and, by looking at The Common Application, will begin to determine how they will ultimately convey this information to colleges. This session will also discuss how special needs and talents factor into the application process.

*Objectives:*

By the end of this session, students will

- understand the importance of “matching” their interests, abilities, and goals with the resources individual colleges can offer
- be familiar with several resources that will help with a college search, including a discussion of the college visit
- be introduced to The Common Application
- understand how special needs and talents are viewed by colleges (this will include artistic, musical, and athletic talents, as well as the needs of students with learning disabilities)

*Activities and Handouts:*

**Recap Activity:** If students would like to share what qualities they would look for in the “Ideal Student” allow 5 or fewer minutes for them to read and discuss.

**PART ONE: Continuing the college search**

**Activity #1:** Beginning the search in earnest

Handouts: Activities Résumé (from Session IV); College Counseling Questionnaire

**Activity #2:** Using college view books to track your interest

Handouts: College Match Tracking Chart; College View Books; Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration (from Session II)

**Activity #3:** Learning through campus visits and college fairs

Handouts: Campus Visits; College Fair Tip Sheet

**PART TWO: College Admission and the Application**

**Activity #4:** Filling out an application

Handouts: Parts of a College Application; The Common Application

5

SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS

## PART ONE: CONTINUING THE COLLEGE SEARCH

### ACTIVITY # 1:

## BEGINNING THE SEARCH

#### *Opening Discussion:*

In Session II, “There is a College for Everybody,” students learned that there are over 3,000 colleges and universities and there is more than one institution that can meet their needs. Building upon the questions discussed in “Charting Your Course for College,” students will begin to personalize the search process, first by determining the questions to ask about what colleges can offer and, second, what they will be able to convey to colleges through the application process.

#### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Activities Résumé (from Session IV)**

#### **College Counseling Questionnaire**

#### *Instructions:*

1. Remind the students that they are at the center of the search, so they need to make their own decisions and realize that the answers to questions will be different for each student.
2. Hand out the “College Counseling Questionnaire” and ask them to complete it as honestly and fully as possible.
3. Then ask them to highlight the factors that they think will be most important to them as they look for the “right match” in a college.



## COLLEGE COUNSELING QUESTIONNAIRE

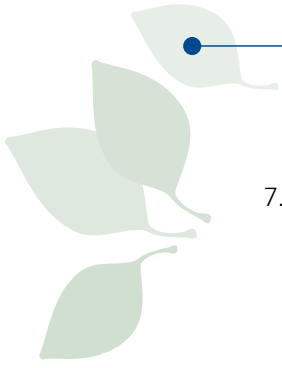
Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

In the space below, please respond to the following questions. Your responses are for your personal information and college counseling only. Therefore, please respond openly and honestly.

### *Location:*

1. Do you have a specific location in mind for college (i.e., a specific city, state, or region)?
2. Do you have any requirements in terms of location (i.e., warm/cold climate, near family, near the ski slopes)?
3. How far from/close to home is the ideal college (i.e., minutes away, an hour away, a day's drive, a plane flight)?
4. Do you prefer a city, a suburb, a small town?
5. Do you want your college to be near other colleges (in a college town)?
6. Do your parents have a certain location in mind?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." *South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School*. 2004

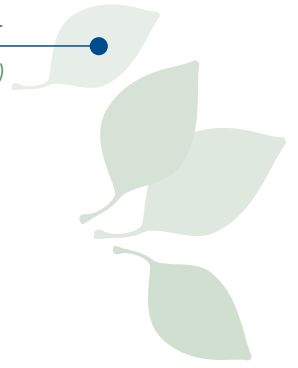


7. Are you willing to consider locations that you have not yet visited or do you prefer a location with which you are comfortable?

*Academic Interests:*

1. Do you have a specific career in mind? What college major do you think would best suit this profession?
2. What other academic areas do you hope to pursue in college?
3. Do you work better when you are challenged by tough classes and motivated classmates or when you are near the top of a less competitive group?
4. How hard do you work in high school?
5. How hard do you expect to work in college?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." *South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School*. 2004

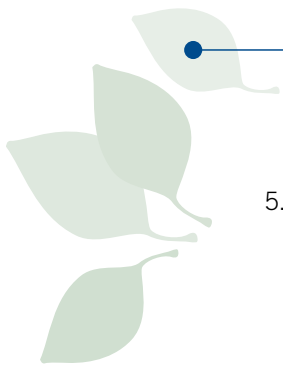


6. What types of academic programs would you like your ideal college to have (study abroad, internships, co-op, honors, etc.)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Is it important that you attend a well-known college?

*Size and Student Body:*

1. Do you prefer a small college (2,000 students or less), a mid-sized college (2,000–8,000), or a large university (over 8,000 students)? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Are you comfortable in small classes? Large classes? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Do you prefer a college that is primarily for undergraduates or a college that has lots of graduate and doctoral students on campus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Would you consider a men's college or a women's college?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." *South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School*. 2004



5. Do you prefer a college with a religious affiliation?

6. Is racial/ethnic diversity important to you?

### *Activities:*

1. Do you plan to participate in sports at college?

2. What other extracurricular activities interest you?

### *Finances:*

Will cost influence where you go to college? Will your family apply for financial aid? Do you think that you will qualify for merit scholarships (based on achievement)?

### *Admission Selectivity:*

If 5 is the most selective (level of difficulty on gaining admission) and 1 is not at all selective, to which level of college do you expect to apply? Which do you think are likely to say yes?

Adapted from Cabral, Joshua. "Addressing the Needs of First-Generation, College-Bound Students: A Comprehensive 5th–12th Grade Approach." *South Boston Harbor Academy Charter School*. 2004

5

SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS

## ACTIVITY # 2: USING COLLEGE VIEW BOOKS TO TRACK YOUR INTEREST

### *Opening Discussion:*

Remind the students about using guidebooks, view books, and the internet to gather information about colleges. Encourage them to begin taking notes on which colleges appeal to them and why.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **College Match Tracking Chart**

#### **College View Books**

#### **Internet Sites Focused on College Exploration (from Session II)**

### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute the “College Match Tracking Chart” and review the descriptive categories.
2. If students know colleges in which they are interested, have them complete the chart using what they already know about those schools. If not, distribute college view books—you may need to divide students into small groups depending on the number of view books you have available—and have them fill in the chart with information they find in the view books. Ask the students if any of these colleges match their interests.
3. Encourage students to design their own charts, reflecting the factors that are most important to them.
4. Remind students to keep this chart and to use it in the future as they continue their college search. This chart is a good way for students and counselors to keep track of the colleges that the students have investigated.



## COLLEGE MATCH TRACKING CHART

Place the name of the colleges that you are interested in at the top of each column. Add any factors that are important to you as you search for the best “match” for you.

	College A	College B	College C
School Name			
Location			
How Competitive?			
Majors Offered			
Extracurricular Activity			
Size of Classes			
Tuition/Scholarship Programs			
Academic Support Programs			
Dorm Choices			
Social Life			

## 5

## SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS

## ACTIVITY # 3: LEARNING THROUGH CAMPUS VISITS AND COLLEGE FAIRS

### *Opening Discussion:*

Students should know that colleges welcome prospective students to their campuses, and campus visits are a wonderful way for students to get to know colleges, when possible. Students should also know that a number of colleges have cost-free visit programs. Colleges often identify potential applicants through guidance counselors. Students should talk with their guidance counselors about these programs and should also contact colleges directly to find out whether they have programs for prospective applicants.

Colleges visit communities across the country and take part in college fairs to share information with prospective students. It's not only important to attend these college fairs, but to be prepared.

### *Part 1: Preparing for the College Visit*

#### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Campus Visits**

### *Part 2: Accessing Colleges Through School Fairs*

#### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **College Fair Tip Sheet**

#### *Instructions:*

#### **Part 1:**

1. Distribute the "Campus Visits" handout.
2. Discuss briefly and answer questions from students.
3. Ask students to keep the handout in their folder for future reference.

#### **Part 2:**

1. Distribute the "College Fair Tip Sheet" handout. Go over the handout with the students.
2. Access a list of college fairs in the area through the NACAC or the regional ACAC Web site.
3. Instruct students to prepare by developing a list of the college booths they want to visit prior to going to the fair. They should research the colleges and use their college tracking charts to help them decide which booths to visit and what questions to ask.
4. Optional activity: If time allows, set up a scenario of two students approaching a college table at a fair, the first one with a list of questions and the second not knowing anything about the college or himself. Role-play the two scenarios.



## CAMPUS VISITS

After you compile a list of colleges to which you are considering applying, it is then time for the campus visit. While it does take time and money, the campus visit is invaluable in information gathering. It allows you and your family to gauge college “fit.”

The visit can give you a true sense of day-to-day life on campus:

- The school may be diverse, but is there a genuine integration of the student body?
- The school may be small, but is it supportive?
- Teachers can be highly qualified, but are they enthusiastic about teaching students?

Understanding a college requires looking beneath the facts and figures.

### *Pre-Planning*

#### **Call to schedule the visit at least two weeks ahead of time.**

Not pre-planning can lead to an unproductive visit. If you call ahead of time, the admissions office will be able to accommodate you and ensure you have a great visit.

#### **Make sure to get proper directions to the admissions office.**

In order to make a good first impression, make sure you know where you’re going so that you can arrive on time. Get a campus map and, if you have any questions, call the admissions office to clarify your directions.

#### **If there is anything specific you wish to see, ask ahead of time.**

Depending upon the time of year, admissions offices may not be able to accommodate you. For example, in the summer months staying overnight or seeing a professor usually does not happen. However, it does not hurt to ask if there might be something of specific interest to you, like visiting a class.

#### **Be flexible.**

Be willing to try something else, and always remember that you want to present yourself positively—you might want to apply to this school later.

#### **If you need to cancel or reschedule, call ASAP.**

Of course, you cannot predict emergencies or unforeseen circumstances but it is a common courtesy to contact the admissions office to let them know that you can’t come.

### *During the Visit*

#### **Take notes**

Write a few things down during the visit. Your notes will be a valuable reference when you are comparing colleges later.

- What image do you get of student life? Talking to current students is a good way to find out what life might be like for you on campus. What activities are students participating in on campus? Do students appear happy with their experience?
- What are the admissions criteria? Admissions criteria vary by college. It is important to find out what you need to do to be eligible for a specific school. Ask what courses and tests need to be taken before you apply.

- What events and speakers are planned? Events and campus guests are another lens through which to evaluate and judge the soul of the college. Are they engaging?

### Ask questions

Take an active role. This is a golden opportunity for you to ask questions about what really matters to you.

- Are answers to your questions consistent? You can determine a lot about whether a college has a certain culture if you receive consistent answers to your questions whether you are asking them of students, admissions personnel, teaching faculty, or administrators. What do people care about? How do students and faculty treat and regard one another?
- Are people asking questions of you? When you meet people during your visit, you can find out a lot by the questions they ask you. Are they asking you questions that lead you to believe they are interested in you and the contribution you will make?

### Try to do some extra things on your own.

Eat in the cafeteria, talk to students, see where they hang out and look around the neighborhood of the school. If you look around, you can get a more complete picture, and not just what the admissions office highlights.

- What is posted on campus bulletin boards? Posters, messages, and announcements about upcoming events all give you an impression about the soul of the college. They inform you what people care about. What are the issues? Who is recruiting for volunteers? Who is speaking out about what?
- What are students doing or talking about when they are not in class? As you walk across the campus, get near students who are speaking to one another. What are they talking about? A campus issue? What just happened in class? Or, about that afternoon's sporting event? When you are eating with students in the dining hall, what are their topics of conversation?

### Don't discount the school because of bad weather or other uncontrollable circumstances.

Some students cross a school off their list simply because it rained, or because they visited during a school break when activities are minimal. Don't fall into this trap.

### Post Visit

#### Always write a thank you note or email the admissions contact.

In order to make a great impression, write a thank you note to those you met on campus. This gives you the opportunity to be remembered when your application is reviewed.

#### Make sure you have contact information for any future questions or concerns.

Keep business cards and pamphlets in some organized folder so that you can refer back to them if necessary.

#### Make sure to remain in contact with the school.

Some schools keep a record of contact information, and in some cases, use that as a measurement of your interest level as the school is considering you for admission.

#### Talk with your high school counselor about the visit.

Parents, relatives, and friends can help you evaluate your impressions after college visits, but your counselor can provide a neutral and informative perspective about your experiences.



## COLLEGE FAIR TIP SHEET

### BEFORE THE FAIR

- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - Do I want to attend an extra large, large, medium or small school?
  - What major do I wish to study?
  - Do I want to attend an urban, suburban or rural school?
  - Do I want to attend a 2 year, 4 year, single sex or religiously affiliated school?
  - Do I want to participate in athletics, clubs, fraternities or sororities or special programs such as study abroad or cooperative education?
- Research colleges that are attending the fair to determine if they meet your search criteria.
- Make a list of questions to ask college representatives. Try to select questions that are insightful and are not easily answered in the literature.
- Bring a resume and/or card with your name, address, high school, year of graduation, email address, intended major and activities in which you want to be involved to give to the representative.

### AT THE FAIR

- Pick up a fair directory and bag for all of the material you collect.
- Visit schools which match or are the closest match to your search criteria.
- Ask the same questions you have developed to each college representative you visit.
- Make sure to fill out an inquiry card to let the college know you were in attendance (or give them a pre-printed card you brought with you). This will enable you to get on their mailing list.
- Make notes about information which you found most interesting/helpful.
- Be adventurous. Don't just talk to the "well known" schools.
- Attend an information session that is offered to gather information about the college search process, financial aid or whatever topics are available.

### AFTER THE FAIR

- Review information (catalogs and view books) to gather more information and help narrow down your choices.
- Send a thank you note/email to the college representative as a way to reinforce your interest in the school.

## 5

## SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS

## PART TWO: COLLEGE ADMISSION AND THE APPLICATION

### ACTIVITY #4: FILLING OUT AN APPLICATION

#### *Opening discussion:*

Begin a discussion on the application process with an interactive question and answer session. Here are some questions and themes to consider:

- How difficult do you think it is to be admitted to college?
- Did you know that some colleges practice what is referred to as “Open Admissions” while others are considered to be highly selective? Some colleges only consider SAT scores and GPA while most will look at many other factors before making a decision. (Remember the “Great Sorting Game”?)
- Referring back the view books and other colleges that have been discussed, see if you can determine schools that are “selective” in their admission policies.
- How do you think those colleges would view you as an applicant, considering your résumés and curriculum plans (courses taken, GPA, activities)? Let the students know that typically students will apply to several colleges and will try to include at least one “realistic” college that they and their guidance counselor think they could get into.
- Are you thinking about playing a sport in college? Playing a musical instrument? Majoring in painting or theatre? If so, then you should know the following:
  - **For the athlete:**
    - Talk to your coaches early and often
    - Don’t be lured into college athletic search companies
    - Be open to all options: Division I, Division II, Division III; NAIA; Club and Intramural Teams
    - Keep your grades up because college are looking for student-athletes, not just athletes
    - If possible, go to the NCAA web site ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)) to learn about eligibility and recruiting rules for all sports. Two other good web sites are: [www.CampusChamps.org](http://www.CampusChamps.org) and [www.athleticaid.com](http://www.athleticaid.com).
  - **For the artists, musicians, and actors:**
    - Discuss your plans with your teachers/instructors
    - Keep your work: portfolios for artists, lists of parts in plays for actors and, when possible, recordings of your music for musicians
    - Auditions for musicians and actors are often part of the admission process for those who are planning to continue to study their art.

## 5

## SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS

## CONTINUED ACTIVITY #4: FILLING OUT AN APPLICATION

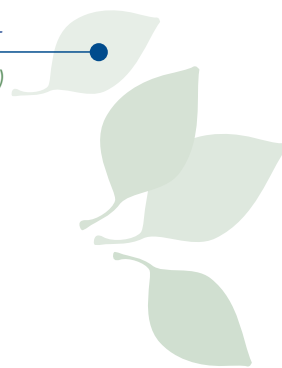
### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Parts of a College Application**

#### **The Common Application**

### *Instructions:*

1. Give each student a copy of “Parts of a College Application” and “The Common Application,” if available.
2. “Walk” the students through the parts of the application using the handout and sample application. There will not be time for them to complete the whole application at this time, but respond to any questions they might have so they could do that when they get home. Emphasize that it is valuable to do a draft application before they submit a “real” one. Here are the sections to focus on:
  - Activities section: Point out that when they completed the “Activities Résumé” in Session IV, the students compiled most of the information they will need for this section. What they will need to do is put that information in the format required by each individual application (often they are asked to list activities in order of importance). Give them time to begin doing that.
  - Secondary School Report Form: Explain that this is the type of form that someone at their high school, probably their counselor, will complete. For colleges that request it, it accompanies the transcript. Ask students what surprises them about this form. Ask them about their relationship with their counselor.
  - Mid-Year Report Form: Explain that this is sent after the fall semester of senior year. Explain to students that changes in their senior year curriculum have to be reported to colleges. SENIOR YEAR MATTERS!!!!
  - Teacher Evaluation Form: Ask students what surprises them about this form. Stress that the purpose of the teacher recommendation is to write about them as a student in that teacher’s classroom. Ask students to identify at least two teachers who they think they could ask to write a recommendation and ask them to jot down several adjectives they think those teachers would use when describing them. Stress that if they can’t think of any teachers now, they should try to build a relationship with a teacher before senior year.
3. Conclude the session with a reminder that by beginning the college search early and by knowing what the components of an application are, the students will be much better prepared to apply to college when the time comes in their senior year. Encourage them to keep all of the materials/handouts in a folder or binder.



## PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

### IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- You, the student, are responsible for sending your actual application and some additional documentation. Your high school is responsible for sending the transcript and a secondary school report (if required). If a teacher agrees to write a letter of recommendation, that teacher is responsible for submitting it. BUT you, the student, are responsible for following your school's policy for requesting transcripts and letters of recommendations. Know what you are expected to do!
- Listed below is everything that *could* be required, but you might not be asked to submit everything on this list to every college. *For example, there are many colleges that do not require students to write essays. There also are many colleges that do not require standardized test scores.*

### WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A COLLEGE APPLICATION?

**A. Official Transcript:** Your transcript is the record of all the courses you have taken for high school credit, your grades, and credits earned. This is the information you should have on the curriculum planner you completed in Session III. Other information that might be included on a transcript: GPA, class rank, standardized test scores, courses in progress. This is normally sent directly from your high school to the college.

#### **B. Standardized Test Scores**

**C. The Application Form:** The student is responsible for requesting an application form, completing it, and submitting it by the college deadline (by mail or online). Many colleges accept The Common Application. No matter what school or what application, these will be important components:

- Personal and Educational Data (i.e., name, address, phone number, e-mail, citizenship and residency information, high schools you have attended, college credits you have earned, parental information, senior year schedule, standardized test scores)
- Honors and Awards
- Extracurricular, Personal, and Volunteer Activities
- Employment, Internships, and Summer Activities (Some colleges allow you to submit a résumé in addition to the activity section of their application.)
- Essays, both short answer and a longer personal essay
- Disciplinary information
- Application Fee (many colleges will accept fee waivers which can be obtained from the guidance office)
- Signature
- For certain majors, students might be required to audition or asked to submit a portfolio of artistic work.



**D. Secondary School Report Form or Counselor Recommendation Form:** This is not required by all colleges but, if it is required, the high school is responsible for submitting this form to the college. However, you will need to request that it be sent. It is important to know and follow your school's procedures.

TIP: Usually the person at your school (probably your counselor) who is completing this form asks for information from students and parents ahead of time. If possible, meet with this person before he or she writes a letter of recommendation.

**E. Mid-Year Report Form:** This form is not required by all colleges but, if it is required, it will be submitted by your high school. However, you must request that it be sent. The purpose of the form is for the college to see your grades from the first term of your senior year.

**F. Teacher Recommendation Form:** This form is not required by all colleges but, if it is, the teacher is responsible for sending it. However, you are responsible for asking a teacher to complete it and giving that teacher all the necessary information. Look over this form and imagine what one of your teachers would say about you. Colleges are not only looking for teachers from courses where you have received an A, but from teachers who know you well and can talk about your work ethic, inquisitive nature, and motivation to learn.



5

SESSION 5: THE COLLEGE SEARCH AND APPLICATION PROCESS

## WRAP-UP

### *Keep in Mind:*

The college search and application process can be very complicated and stressful if students don't TAKE THE TIME to manage the process carefully. Students should first take into account their interests before choosing a school because not just any school can meet all of the students' needs. Campus visits and college fairs are great ways to gain information that can help students' determine if a school is the right "fit". Once determining a list of schools, remind students that they should carefully fill out applications, making sure to consult the handouts and assignments that they have done thus far to facilitate the completion of their applications.

### *Homework:*

1. Instruct students that, if they haven't already done so, it is now time to sit down and talk with their parents about their college options.
2. Not only can students share all that they have learned through the program, but they can ask their parents for their thoughts on their child(ren)'s college possibilities.
3. Students should also encourage their parents to attend the awards ceremony at the end of final session of the program.





# 6

## SESSION 6: BUILDING YOUR DREAM TEAM AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD

The purpose of this session is to help students build momentum for their college planning that will carry them through to the actual point of selecting and making application to colleges. Students will be encouraged to think about the resources upon which they may draw over their high school years, including the adults in their lives.

### *Objectives:*

By the end of this session, students will have

- Identified individuals who can serve as mentors in college planning,
- Explored summer experiences that will enrich college readiness,
- Enhanced problem-solving skills to be used as they pursue college admission,
- Been reinforced with congratulations and a certificate of completion.
- Completed an evaluation form.

### *Activities and Handouts:*

**(Activities #1 and #2 require chalkboard and chalk or flipchart and markers)**

**Recap Activity:** If students would like to share what qualities they would look for in the “Ideal Student” allow 5 or fewer minutes for them to read and discuss.

**Activity #1:** Finding Friends and Mentors on Your Path to College

Handouts: With a Little Help From My Friends (first two questions); How to Use Your School Counselor

**Activity #2:** Using Your Time Beyond the Classroom to Prepare for College

Handouts: With a Little Help From My Friends (third question); Summer Programs—You mean what I do in the summer can help me with college options?

**Activity #3:** Developing College-Readiness Problem-Solving Skills

Handout: My Map to College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now!

**Activity #4:** Wrapping it All Up

Handouts: Certificate of Completion; Evaluation tool

## 6

## SESSION 6: BUILDING YOUR DREAM TEAM AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD

## ACTIVITY # 1: FINDING FRIENDS AND MENTORS ON THE PATH TO COLLEGE

### *Opening Discussion:*

Each one of us requires friends and mentors as we work toward our future goals. It is important that students identify the individuals who can help them reach their goal of college attendance. Students should consider who may help or impede their planning for college.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **With a Little Help From My Friends**

#### **How to Use Your School Counselor**

### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute the handout, "With a Little Help from My Friends". Allow approximately five minutes for students to answer the questions.
2. Ask students to share with the group the individual they have identified as a mentor and what role that person has played in each student's life.
3. Discussion: Have students report on the individuals whom they have identified as potential friends and mentors during their college planning process. Use the chalkboard or flip chart to list individuals by the roles played in the students' lives. By the end of this activity, students should have touched upon these individuals: Parents, Siblings, School Counselors, Teachers, Coaches and leaders of extracurricular activities, Community and religious leaders, Employers
4. Distribute the handout, "How to Use Your School Counselor. Give students a few minutes to review the handout.
5. Ask students to share what their experience with school counselors has been to date.
6. Discuss with students the special resource that school counselors may provide. Suggest ways to overcome problems that may have arisen in effective working relationships to date.



## WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

A mentor is defined as: “a wise and trusted teacher or guide”. Your road to college will be much easier if you enlist the help of more than one mentor along the way.

1. Name a person who has had a positive influence on your ability to go to college:  
(Note: this person is one of your “mentors”)
  - What is this individual’s relationship to you?
  - How has he/she helped you move ahead toward college?
2. Who else can you think of who could be a “mentor” and help you attain your college goals?
3. Identify an experience you have had outside of the classroom (during the last year) that makes it more likely that you will have a successful college experience.
  - How did this help you prepare for college?



## HOW TO USE YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

School counselors are one of the best ongoing sources of support for students who plan to go to college. They can be your friend throughout the entire college process. If you are lucky enough to have access to a counselor in your school, it is in your best interest to visit that person on a regular basis.

Start by making an individual appointment to introduce yourself to your counselor. Begin your meeting by introducing yourself and stating clearly that it is your definite goal to attend college. Make sure your counselor realizes that this is IMPORTANT to you and that you are HIGHLY MOTIVATED! Whatever grade you are in NOW, this is the time to start helping your counselor get to know you and your college dreams.

*Throughout your high school years, your counselor can help you:*

- Plan classes that will prepare you well for college admission and success. Your counselor will know which high school classes are required for college admission.
- Review your academic record and suggest areas that need improvement.
- Begin the admissions process by identifying the questions you should be asking—and finding honest answers.
- Find information; for example in books, catalogues, brochures, and CDs that deal either with the admissions process or a specific college or university.
- Locate Web sites that offer RELIABLE and FREE information about college.
- Identify special opportunities that may maximize your chances for being a well-prepared and appealing candidate for colleges. These might include weekend or summer programs on college campuses (often free for first-generation students), internships, or community college classes open to high school students.
- Learn about local college fairs, opportunities to visit college campuses, and even overnight visits to colleges that may be offered.
- Familiarize yourself with everything you need to know about the required college admission tests. Provide a fee waiver if you cannot pay for tests yourself.
- Figure out how to PAY for college. Your counselor can give you essential information about the “need-based” financial aid application process.

If you feel it will be helpful, ask your counselor to meet with you and the members of your family who will be working with you in your college planning. Having everyone in agreement about your future will make the process much easier!

## 6

## SESSION 6: BUILDING YOUR DREAM TEAM AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD

## ACTIVITY #2: USING YOUR TIME BEYOND THE CLASSROOM TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE OPENING DISCUSSION:

Students should understand that experiences beyond the classroom can help them prepare for college admission and success. Colleges care about how students elect to use their unscheduled time. In particular, summer is an important time that can be used to enhance maturity, motivation, and academic readiness.

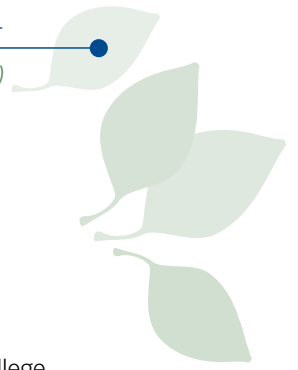
### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **With a Little Help From My Friends (third question)**

#### **Summer Programs—You mean what I do in the summer can help me with college options?**

### *Instructions:*

1. Following up on question #3 from the handout students completed in Activity #2, ask each to share the experience that has enhanced their likelihood of a successful college experience and how this has helped them to prepare for college. Use the chalkboard or flip chart to list these activities.
2. Ask students to group these activities by kind, for example:
  - extracurricular activity
  - sports
  - church
  - employment
  - academic enrichment
3. Distribute the handout on Summer Programs. Explain that, in addition to what has already been listed, a summer program may be an exceptionally good experience in terms of college preparation. Point students particularly to the Web sites they may use to explore summer programs. (If computers are available, some time may be devoted to exploring the sites listed.)



## SUMMER PROGRAMS:

*You mean what I do in the summer can help me with college options?*

What comes to mind when you think of summer? Summer job? Fun in the sun? Travel? How about college preparation? And did you know that colleges will take note of HOW you have used your summers as an indication of your educational preparation?

Working at a summer job can certainly help you save money for college and provide adult mentors, but think about investing some time at a summer program on a college campus. Many are free or low cost, with scholarship options. The right choice can help you learn what it's like to be in college, where your career interests can lead you, and how to connect with more people who can help you in the college process.

### **HELPFUL HINTS FOR FINDING THE RIGHT SUMMER PROGRAM FOR YOU:**

Find a program that fits your academic area of interest or just narrow down the list of things that seem of interest.

- Many colleges and universities host summer programs for high school students. Finding a program on a college campus will expose you to the college experience and help orient you for college life.
- Ask your local college or university about the programs they offer. Or, if you know what college you might want to attend after high school, look there.
- Many programs are associated with some type of cost, so be mindful of that. If cost is a concern, ask the program if they have financial aid or fee waivers. And also be aware that there are free summer programs out there.
- Registration deadlines are extremely important. Some programs accept every student who applies, and some are very selective. The best way to ensure your selection is to apply early. Make sure all necessary documentation is in your application so that it can be processed and so that you can be considered for the program of your choice.

While these programs are important for your development and your future, remember that this is still your summer vacation. In other words, communicate with your family as to the best times for you to participate in these programs.

In the end, you should pick the summer enrichment program that is the best fit for you academically and socially. Choose something in which you have a serious interest, and ask as many questions as you can about the program you choose so that you know exactly what to expect.

Visit [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) to find a great variety of summer programs, from camps to internships.

*Also check out these Web sites for representative possibilities:*

**www.leadnational.org**—a partnership of top business schools and corporations that provides summer programs for high school juniors

**www.blackexcel.org/summer-progs.htm**—a comprehensive list of options for minority students

**www.jackierobinson.org**—provides educational and leadership development programs as well as scholarships, mentors, and internships

**www.abetterchance.org**—a resource for identifying, recruiting and developing leaders among young people in underserved populations

**www.jbhe.com**—The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education evaluates many programs and campuses seeking diversity

*And here are just a few examples of summer college programs for high school students:*

**http://bioengineering.union.edu** (click on outreach)—**2 week, all expense paid program for underrepresented sophomores and** juniors interested in biology and bioengineering

**www.carleton.edu/summer/CLAE**—a week long, all expense paid program for juniors to introduce them to college life and the value of a liberal arts education

**http://courses.ncssm.edu/bennett/RECAP**—a 3-week research experience for students interested in chemistry, astronomy, or physics

**www.spelman.edu/academics/programs/biology/howardhughes\_summer.shtml**—a 5 week non-residential program for students interested in the sciences



## 6

## SESSION 6: BUILDING YOUR DREAM TEAM AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD

## ACTIVITY #3: DEVELOPING COLLEGE- READINESS PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

### OPENING DISCUSSION:

Students need to begin thinking ahead to how they will continue planning for college beyond the end of this session. The purpose of this activity is to help students consider how they will address challenges that may arise as they continue on their path to college. The exercise calls upon topics covered throughout the six session series. By problem solving and sharing with one another, students should grow in their determination to reach their goal—COLLEGE!!

#### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **My Map to College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now!**

#### *Instructions:*

1. Distribute the handout: My Map to College: Nothing Can Stop Me Now!
2. Divide students into small groups of, perhaps, three. Instruct them to follow the directions on the first page of the handout.
3. Bring the whole group back together. Move from small group to small group asking for their response to each challenge-point: Was it a “bump in the road” or a “roadblock”? How did they think the challenge might be addressed? Who might help?
4. Let other groups respond before moving on to the next challenge.
5. Invite the whole group to summarize what they have heard/learned from this exercise.



## MY MAP TO COLLEGE: NOTHING CAN STOP ME NOW<sup>5</sup>

Congratulations, you've made the decision to go to college. Good for you!! Now you are in the driver's seat and here is a map to get you started on your way. You are going to find that there are some bumps in the road and even a few roadblocks. In order to reach your final destination—COLLEGE—you will need to figure out how to get over the bumps and around the roadblocks.

Work with your small group to come up with solutions to the challenges you will encounter on this map. First decide if this is a “bump in the road” (fairly easy to get over), or a “roadblock” (will require time and work). Next discuss possible solutions. Jot down who you might go to for help in making progress and/or how you solved the problem. Be ready to share with the whole group at the end.

<sup>5</sup> Copyright 2008: Mary Lee Hoganson



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SESSION 6: BUILDING YOUR DREAM TEAM AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD

## ACTIVITY # 4: WRAPPING IT ALL UP

### *Opening Discussion:*

This is an opportunity for you to congratulate all students on their commitment to attend college and their participation in the sessions. You will want to motivate students to continue beyond these sessions.

### *Activity/Handout:*

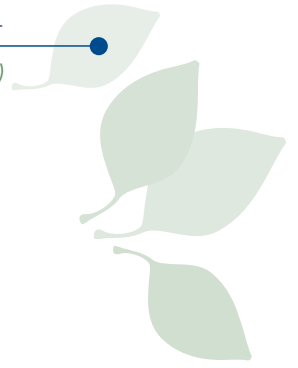
#### **Evaluation tool**

#### **Certificate of Completion**

### *Instructions:*

1. In your own way, thank and congratulate students on their participation and completion of the series of sessions.
2. Ask students for informal oral feedback on their experience.
3. Distribute Evaluation Tool and collect when completed.
4. Distribute Certificates of Completion.





## APPENDIX:

- LETTER FOR PARENTS
- FINAL LETTER TO STUDENTS
- CERTIFICATES FOR STUDENTS
- STUDENT EVALUATION
- COUNSELOR EVALUATION

*Suggested letter to be sent home to parents or guardians:*

## DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

I am very pleased that your college-bound student has chosen to participate in the Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students. During these sessions we will be working together to explore:

- the importance of attending college in terms of career choices, lifetime earning power, and lifestyle choices
- how students must prepare in order to be admitted to college
- what students must accomplish in high school in order to succeed in college
- the college selection and application process
- how our nation's financial aid system makes college attendance possible for all motivated and qualified students.

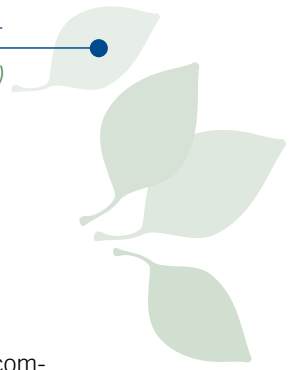
The ideas and materials for these sessions have been developed by members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). School counselors, with many years experience devoted to helping students find their way to college, have put some of their best thinking into the design of each activity.

Support at home will make all the difference in making sure that your student gets as much as possible from this experience. Please encourage regular attendance. After each session, I encourage you to ask your student what he or she has learned and discussed. Sometimes I will send home material to be shared with you.

Your student is taking a very important step on the road to college entrance. I look forward to this opportunity to be a part of that journey.

**Sincerely,**

Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students Leader



*Suggested letter for students upon completion of workshops*

**DEAR**

Congratulations! You have completed the Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students sessions. I commend the time, energy and effort that you have put into planning for your future educational and career goals.

I know that you are excited about looking ahead to college. Your participation in this program has given you some of the knowledge and tools that you will need to make a successful transition from school to college. I encourage you to let this be just the FIRST of MANY steps toward fulfilling your goal of a college education. An investment in a college education is, without a doubt, the best investment that anyone can make.

I encourage you to continue to work hard and use every resource available to you in order to fulfill all of your hopes and dreams for an excellent education. I thank you for allowing me to work with you.

**Sincerely,**

Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students Leader

*Suggested certificate for students upon completion of workshops*

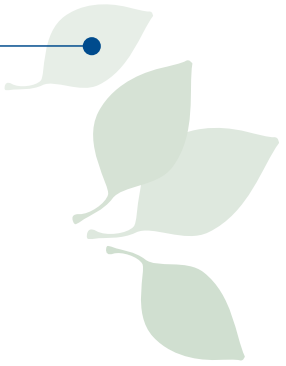


National Association for  
College Admission Counseling  
[www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)

\_\_\_\_\_ has completed

*The National Association for College Admission Counseling*

**STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS  
FOR STUDENTS**



National Association for College Admission Counseling

# STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

## Student Evaluation

Your input regarding this program will help us improve our workshops for students in the future. Please complete the information below and return this form to your facilitator. You do not need to put your name on this form.

	<b>RATING</b>				
	<i>Disagree</i>				<i>Agree</i>
<i>(Please circle one choice for your rating)</i>					
The program gave me new information and ideas	1	2	3	4	5
I had plenty of time for questions and discussion	1	2	3	4	5
I now have a better idea of my plans for the future	1	2	3	4	5
The program has made me more likely to go to college	1	2	3	4	5
The program facilitator was prepared and helpful	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend this program to a friend	1	2	3	4	5

Things I liked best about the program:

Things I didn't like about the program:

I wish I had learned more about:

Other comments:



National Association for College Admission Counseling

# STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

## Leader Program Evaluation

(Please return to NACAC. Fax: 703-836-8015 or Mail: 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 400, Arlington, VA 22201)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Workshops: \_\_\_\_\_

*We want to thank you for volunteering to conduct the Step-by-Step to College Workshops for Students.  
We would appreciate your feedback.*

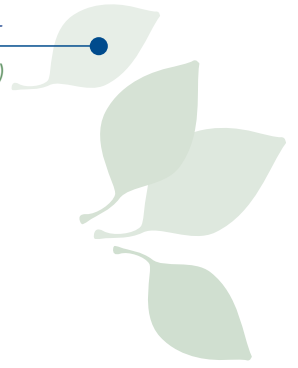
How did you identify your target group?

Where did you conduct the workshops (School, church, community center)?

How many students were involved?

Which section(s) did you cover (Middle School, Early HS, Late HS)?

Were you able to complete the entire 5/6 session program for the section(s) presented?



Were you able to cover each session in a reasonable amount of time?

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the most positive:

The clarity of the program directions:

The quality of the handouts:

Age appropriateness of the exercises and handouts:

Please rate each of the 5/6 sessions on the following:

	<i>Length</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Quality</i>
<b>Session I</b>			
<b>Session II</b>			
<b>Session III</b>			
<b>Session IV</b>			
<b>Session V</b>			
<b>Session VI</b>			

Overall evaluation of the program:

We welcome any comments or suggestions that might improve the program:







**National Association for  
College Admission Counseling**  
[www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org)