

A Family's Guide to the College Search



A few things to keep in mind:

Rule of Thumb #1: All Schools do it a little bit differently--if you asked a question at one school, NEVER assume it is done that way at another school!

To assist with that in mind: keep a notebook or excel/google sheet of top schools and their specifics (deadlines, application types, FA requirements, program/major info, scholarships, etc.)

Remind your student to be mindful of their social media: clean it up/keep it clean/keep it secure and then start to follow the accounts of the schools being considered

Do the work in advance--a student shouldn't apply to 20+ schools waiting to see where they get in before truly researching the places (especially if cost is a factor in your decision!)--lots of online resources, especially in the COVID age, to assist and help narrow to a few from the top of the curve, a few in the middle and a few at the lower end--the key is that the student would be happy at ANY of them in the end!

A few MORE things to keep in mind:

Start the scholarship search NOW, don't wait to pile that into application season (schools will have their own to do then), there are lots of private scholarships to explore that can help fund the education including local organizations, civic groups, larger corporations you may work for, etc.

Let the student make the connections (demonstrated interest may count & means more if it is from the student):

- *read emails/mail that a school sends & unsubscribe from any you are no longer interested in*
- *email or call your admission counselor (& send a thank-you notecard after an interview!)*
- *set up a Zoom or attend an online presentation, take a virtual tour, visit for a campus tour (if you are comfortable and the school is open to visits)*

This needs to be the student's process, possibly their first adult decision to make--the parent is now to be the cheerleader, not the primary advocate

Finding your academic fit



- What kind of academic experience do you want?
- Don't ask "What's your minimum GPA?"
- Think about scholarship possibilities!
- What the heck is "holistic review" anyway?

App Review @ X

- **Transcript**
 - strength of schedule
 - grades trends
 - coursework grades for Nursing (bio/chem)
- **Test Scores (if submitted)**
- **Essay**
- **Letters of recommendation**
 - counselor
 - teacher(s)/academic
- **Resume/Activities List**

Student App Timeline

- ❑ *Spring JR year:* set up your Common Application account & get familiar (Aug. 1 is when the 2023 applications will go live)
- ❑ *Summer:* finish up your college essay, write up your activities resume, have your list of recommenders to request, VISIT campuses
- ❑ *Fall SR year:* ask you recommenders to write a letter, prioritize your applications by deadline & get them submitted in advance (*which means getting other requests done earlier*)
- ❑ *Late fall:* file your 2023-24 FAFSA (opens Oct. 1) and (if needed) CSS Profile
- ❑ *Winter SR year:* login to each school's portal to check your application status, read emails being sent from your schools to make sure nothing is missing, patiently await your admission decision
- ❑ *Next spring:* make your final decision!

Where to start (aka April/May/June)

TO DO:

- ❑ Set up a college application only email address (shared access)
- ❑ Set up voicemail on the phone # being used on applications
- ❑ Set up family chat time (starter & on-going)
- ❑ Set up a physical college mail/storage spot

Family Factors:

How close or far from home?

Are there family ties to a school/legacy?

What can we afford (range), is my family able/willing to help pay or am I on my own, what about taking/qualifying for loans?

Student Reflection:

What do I want to be when I grow up?

What has been my best or favorite subject thus far?

What activity(s) do I want to keep doing?

Student's view of campus:

- Do I have a campus image in my head already?
- How close to a city or transportation hub do I want/need to be?

What have I heard, from a credible source (not a "I heard that...")--good or bad, about a place?

- Do they have my major?
- Are there students like me, will I find "my people"?
- Do I want to be a big fish or a small fish?

As you search, remember:

Highly Selective



- 17 schools admitted fewer than 10% of their applicants.
- Multiple readers for each app
- Academics, yes, but fit too
- Less of a way to predict who is admitted and who is not.

The GOOD NEWS

The average acceptance rate for four year institutions across the US is

66.7 percent.

Applying to X (aka Aug/Sept)

(note the terms to know)

- **Common App** or Xavier Application
- **Rolling** notification of **decision** & aid
- Initial **scholarship at time of admission** (Fall 2021: range of \$16,000-24,000, renewable)
- DECEMBER 1: **Priority Deadline** for admission & following programs:
 - Nursing (**direct entry**)
 - **FAFSA** only for financial aid consideration
 - **Competitive Scholarships** (separate apps):
 - www.xavier.edu/scholarship
 - Academic (SFX), service oriented (CEF) & others (incl outside resources)
 - **Honors Programs** (separate apps)
- **Test Optional**
- **2-step admission process** for:
 - Music & Theatre majors
 - Honors majors
 - Classics & Philosophy
 - Data Science
 - Philosophy, Politics & the Public

Terms to know:

- **Decision Type:** Early Decision (binding), Early Action, ED or EA II, Regular Decision, Rolling Decision
- **Which application:** school's own app, Common App, Coalition App, Universal App
- **Testing policy:** required, Test Optional, Optional with exceptions, Test Blind
- **Admission decision:** direct entry, two-step programs (may require: audition/portfolio/interview), entire university or college/program specific, defer, wait list, deposit/enroll
- **School Scholarships:** considered/awarded at admission or additional steps (application &/or competition), endowed awards, criteria (i.e. academic, talent, leadership, service)

SIDE BAR: application concerns due to COVID

Know everyone's 2020-21 was derailed by COVID

Schools will understand that activities were limited, time commitments reprioritized and interaction with teachers may have only been on screen
Few (if any) students have done college visits, spring break/summer swing road trips may not be possible

The ability to take an SAT or ACT should not affect the admission process

Many schools were already test-optional, many others have made multi-year commitments to being optional due to COVID, keep an eye on those that said TO for 2021 but have yet to announce for next cycle--their policy may change/renew for 2023, and then there are test blind schools

A LOT of resources are now at your fingertips!

Schools have used the pandemic to expand their online resources with Zoom sessions, live online visit programs, chat rooms and virtual tours

A few web resources to get you going

Application Based:

www.commonapp.org

www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org

Testing, Financial Aid & Scholarships:

www.fairtest.org

www.act.org

www.collegeboard.org (*SAT & CSS Profile*)

www.studentaid.gov

www.fastweb.com

Additional online help along the way:

www.collegeessayguy.com

www.collegecovered.com/resources-for-counselors

June/July = get visiting

- **Early visits** (& local visits) might be helpful in setting a bar & eliminating schools from lists
- **Don't overbook** session & tour is great the first time around, you don't need to schedule every possible appointment that first go-round, it is always good to go back after being admitted
- **Usual takeaways** the weather, the campus layout, the appearance of students across campus, the tour guide
- **Pro's & Con's** keep mental lists as you go & don't forget to write it all down at the end
- **Questions** that you didn't get to ask or came up on the ride home--follow up with an email to your counselor after (part of your thank-you email after!)

All Summer = explore virtually

- **What is highlighted** was it was was important to your family's search or maybe helps you eliminate if it wasn't
- **Focus** on the content as if you were there, don't just let it go in the background--if it is a recording you can pause, walk away & come back if there is a distraction
- **Follow up** as questions aren't always able to be asked, it is a great reason to connect with the admission staff after or email the presenter
- **Pro's & Con's** this time you can write them down as it goes along
- **Sign Up** odds are the student is signing up to view the program/tour, but if not, make sure to get on the list if it was of interest (and be sure to unsubscribe after if it wasn't!)

THIS SUMMER: have “the talk”

Money is often the primary concern & role of the parents in the process

- ❑ **Budget** college is an investment, so set a budget now & don't keep it a secret--students shouldn't be shopping for a Bugatti Chiron if the family has budgeted for a Chevy Spark
- ❑ **Net Price Calculator** each school should have one on their website
- ❑ **Scholarship Searches** aside from what schools are offering, what else is out there (national/local: what are you involved with--national cultural organizations, unions, civic groups)--and ask at your high school, they keep files & lists on local programs & things other students have been successful obtaining--start applying now!!!
- ❑ **FAFSA & CSS Profile** (and are their school specific forms too?)
- ❑ **Terms to know/learn/ask about:**
 - ❑ *Gift Aid (scholarship, grant)*
 - ❑ *Scholarships: automatic, additional application, competition?*
 - ❑ *Self Help (work-study, loans: federal & private)*
 - ❑ *Loans: willing? who will take? how much? will we qualify?*
 - ❑ *Need blind/need aware/meets need*
 - ❑ *Meets full need: with gift aid or combination aid?*
 - ❑ *Family contribution is not just parents' pockets*
 - ❑ *Direct costs/indirect costs*
 - ❑ *Savings plans (you would already have), payment plans*



Where to go from here?

To do TONIGHT: set up a college application email address with shared access if you haven't already

To do over the week ahead: talk as a family about where to go from here (first of many conversations)

To do over the next month: student self reflection & check in with the counseling staff at your school as to setting expectations and timelines for the year ahead (you may already have a meeting scheduled!)

To do over the next few months: research schools (*location, size [overall & avg class], majors, internships, post-graduate success, student life/activities, middle 50% profile, costs, scholarship opportunities*), schedule virtual or in-person visits to campuses & students should be reaching out to admission folk at schools on their list

Students, remember going forward: every school does it a little different, ask if you have a question (aka find your Erin)!

Parents, remember going forward: your job now is cheerleader, let your student drive this process & speak for themself!

There is a lot of unknown throughout this process, it is an art not a science, as always: if you have a question, ask!

*So here is your chance:
using the chat function, please ask questions now*

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Explore XAVIER virtually:
<https://www.xavier.edu/making-a-musketeer/index>