

A Student's Guide on Next Steps



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.)

Be mindful of your social media: clean it up/keep it clean/keep it secure (private, truly private) 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.

Make 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 YOUR process, possibly your first adult decision to make--your parents are now to be the cheerleaders, not the primary advocates

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?

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 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!)

Common App Prompts 2023

Below is the full set of essay prompts for 2022–2023. We will also retain the optional COVID–19 question within the Additional Information section.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Approaching the essay:

- Online tutorials & gurus like “The College Essay Guy”
<https://www.collegeessayguy.com/>
- Some colleges (i.e. Johns Hopkins) have their own pages for successful or memorable essays, see if the schools you are considering keeps one
- Make sure you answer the prompt
- Make sure it is about YOU!
- Make sure you have it proofed/spell checked/grammar checked
- Keep it authentic/your voice
- Tips & tricks:
<https://www.xavier.edu/x-guides/2020-essay-tips/guides>

WRITING AN ESSAY

As you prepare to apply to colleges, you can start thinking about your essay now. This is your chance to paint a picture of who you are and why you are a good fit for the colleges you are considering.

WHAT COLLEGES ARE LOOKING FOR IN YOUR ESSAY:

- We want to know that you WANT to be a part of our campus community.
- We want to know what you will contribute to our university. Your unique talents and identity are valued at our institution. We want to be able to envision you here.
- We want to see that you can think and write clearly and logically.
- We want to hear your essay through your voice.

WHAT COLLEGES ARE NOT LOOKING FOR IN YOUR ESSAY:

- We don't want to know what you've already told us in your application—no need to repeat what is already in your resumé.
- We don't want to hear that you can't wait to be a part of school Y (when we are school X)! If you are going to include a school name in your essay, be sure it is the school that you're sending your essay to.
- We don't want to read a rambling essay or your deepest, darkest secret. Be genuine, and be sure your essay is well thought out before drafting.

WHEN DETERMINING YOUR TOPIC:

- What do you want us to know? What is something that you can paint a picture of, rather than just tell us in words?
- What can you write about that will answer the question in a compelling way?
- Can you write about this in your own voice?
- Is this a topic that we won't hear about from your peers?
- Will your answer be uniquely about you?
- Are you passionate about this topic? If you are (or if you are not) it will show in your writing.

ONCE YOU DECIDE ON YOUR TOPIC:

- Brainstorm. Think about your own unique experiences and passions and how they connect with this topic. Consider how you may bring all of this to contribute to the specific college(s) you are applying to.
- Construct an outline. Determine how you will introduce the topic, paint your picture, and wrap it all up in a conclusion.
- Start drafting. Realize that your first draft will not be your last. You will need to edit and cut in later versions, but start by getting it all on paper — then go back to edit yourself.
- Unfortunately, you may not be able to work in all the details you hope to. Determine what is the most important information to share. Understand that you will likely have to cut some sentences or paragraphs, regardless of how well written they are.

PIECES OF ADVICE:

- When you complete your essay, read it out loud. Are there grammatical errors? Is the story you are telling authentic? Does it sound like you?
- Get a second opinion. Ask someone you trust to read your essay and provide critical feedback. If it's a friend who is also applying to colleges, offer to do the same for them.
- Plan ahead. Give yourself enough time to prepare and organize your thoughts well in advance of the due date. Be sure you are building in time for editing so you can be confident in your final product!

What to talk about?

- Start with CA prompts unless you KNOW you aren't using the CA for ANY application, but ultimately this essay is insight into YOU that isn't shown by your application, recommendations, activities, transcript or test scores
- Remember: not ALL CA schools require the essay
- Remember: check the CA supplement requirements for school specific additional essays & short answer questions that need to be worked on
- If you have schools that aren't on the CA, research what their requirements are for writing
- Even if the school doesn't require a “why us” essay, have the answer to that question in your head at least in short form for interviews or interacting with school personnel

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)!

And for your parents 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:
Questions?*

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Explore XAVIER virtually:

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