



LSU Laboratory School  
College Planning Handbook

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## SO YOU WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE.....

Transitioning from high school to college doesn't happen by accident or chance. It involves a deliberate and considered process of:

- Reflecting on what you want from the college experience
- Outlining your academic credentials, personal talents and individual accomplishments
- Researching colleges and universities that match your academic and personal goals and
- Completing the application process for admittance

Approach your Junior and Senior years with the attitude of an athlete in training. Use this workbook to capture information about yourself and to explore schools that fit your goals/ needs. Involve others to gain their wisdom, insight and experience to inform your thinking. Follow the steps outlined to submit an application worthy of consideration. And most of all, pour yourself into the process so you can make a choice of which you will be proud.

We enjoy sharing our expertise and helping students navigate the college planning process. Students and parents are encouraged to be proactive and contact us the whenever assistance is needed. Don't be shy! We welcome the opportunity to assist students in reaching their fullest potential!

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## THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS DECISION

To start, it is important that you gain some insight into just how the admission process works. Students often approach their college search believing that all the “power” lies with the college/ university and that their fate is out of their hands, so to speak. However, you control several critical pieces of the puzzle; you decide where to apply, how to present yourself and which offer of admission to ultimately accept. Plan to invest time and energy for the parts of the process you do control.

During your Junior and Senior years, you will carefully gather a great deal of information about yourself. This “portfolio” will serve as the foundation for your applications to a short list of colleges and universities of your choice. The following sections of this handbook provide a framework for developing your “portfolio” of information and applying it to the college search process.

One important point to keep in mind – Universities don’t look at your individual application in a vacuum. Rather, they consider how your background and experience will add to the overall character of their incoming class. It is the job of the Admission Officer to search for a qualified group of students who will be able to meet the challenges and rigors of the university experience. After you submit your application, know that it is carefully reviewed in terms of **how it fits into the overall academic, social and cultural climate of the school in a particular year.**

While it is true that each institution will emphasize their own special set of criteria in evaluating the fit of potential students – most consider some combination of the following factors:

### The rigor of the high school curriculum

Colleges look closely at the courses you have chosen during your four years of high school. They want to see you challenging yourself, which means taking advantage of Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment (DE), and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. Admission officers pay attention to the courses you choose to take as a senior. They may interpret a weak senior schedule as a sign that you lack motivation, so continue to work hard.

### Performance in courses

Admission officers evaluate the actual grades you have made in classes throughout your four years in high school. They will notice both upward and downward trends, as well as the consistency of your performance. In some cases, a college may recalculate your GPA based solely on your academic coursework (excluding PE and some electives.) The combination of the rigor of your curriculum and your performance is considered one of the best predictors of your likely success in college.

### Your standardized test scores

Standardized test scores give admission officers a standard by which to compare you with students from very different high schools. But remember, scores do not give data on motivation, self-discipline, your concern for others, your sense of humor or any of those qualities of mind and heart that are extremely important when a college is selecting an incoming class. Schools vary in terms of which standardized tests they use. Check about their exact requirements and know that in some cases you may also be asked to submit SAT Subject Test scores.

### Your contributions at home, school and in the community

Most colleges ask that you provide a list of activities and special programs in which you have been involved, as well as any jobs you have held, in order to understand you “outside the classroom.” In this way they can look beyond your academic experience to determine the depth of commitment you have shown to certain interests. It is much more important to be committed and involved in a few ways, serving as a leader and receiving recognition, rather than to simply join numerous activities and approach them in a half-hearted manner.

### What you bring to the college

Colleges are not looking for well-rounded students; **they are looking for a well-rounded student body.** Your areas of interest and expertise, whether in athletics (and not just in a varsity sport,) the arts, journalism, debate, community service or some other activity, show how you will be part of that. Proudly list your accomplishments and passions, no matter how unconventional. This is not boasting. It is giving the colleges what they need to evaluate your fit and is central to the admissions decision.

### Writing sample/ Essay

Most colleges will require that you submit at least one essay as a part of the application process. These are examined closely to evaluate technical writing skills, and to learn something about you that has not been revealed in other parts of your application. Spend time and thought on your college admission essays – it is the one part of the process over which you have total control– and a well-written essay can make all the difference in the success of your application

### Other admission selection criteria

The following areas may also be considered when making an admission decision:

- Family ties to the college/ university (Are you a legacy?),
- Early Decision or Regular Decision; your degree of expressed interest,
- Whether or not your application was complete and met the deadline,
- The overall appearance of your completed application.

## TAKE A LOOK AT YOU

Needs, Aspirations, Values & Strengths The college admission search process begins with you – with what is important to you and where you see yourself in the future. A first critical step in this journey is a personal self-assessment; Examine your strengths and limitations, your likes and dislikes, your needs and interests. Think about your priorities. Once you have spent some time reflecting on your goals/ dreams/ needs/ aspirations – no matter how vague –the search will become much easier.

**Respond to the following questions. Your answers could lead to appropriate themes for your college essay.**

### Goals and Values

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

### Academics

1. What are your academic interests?
2. Which courses have you most enjoyed (and done well in?)
3. Which courses have been the most difficult for you?
4. How do you learn best?
5. Do you prefer lectures or discussion?
6. Do you like to read, discuss issues and/ or exchange ideas? What was your most stimulating intellectual experience in recent years?
7. Is having close interaction and attention from your teachers important to you?
8. Or do you prefer more anonymity?
9. Has high school been challenging for you?
10. What challenges you the most? Do you want to continue the same level of challenge in college?
11. Have you worked to your potential thus far in high school?
12. What do you see as the best measures of your potential for college work?
13. Have any outside circumstances affected your academic performance?

### Activities, Interests and Hobbies

1. What extracurricular activities do you most enjoy?
2. Of the activities you most enjoy, which do you want to continue in college?
3. Are there activities that you have not been involved in during high school that you might like to explore in college?
4. Do you enjoy being in a leadership role?
5. In which activities have you held or hope to hold leadership roles?
6. Have you been recognized for activities with awards or honors?
7. What are your most significant contributions to University Laboratory School?

9. What are you most proud of?
10. After a long hard day, what do you enjoy doing most?
11. What do you do for fun?
12. What do you enjoy doing for relaxation?

### Your Needs in Terms of College Fit

1. Why do you want an education?

Why are you going to college? What do you hope to gain from college? Are you interested in career preparation, technical training or general knowledge?

2. What are you looking forward to in college?

3. What worries you most about going off to college?

4. How much structure and guidance do you believe you need?

Would you succeed at a school where you are rarely told what to do?

5. What degree of academic challenge is best for you?

6. Which of your academic pursuits requires special facilities, programs or opportunities?

7. Which of your extracurricular pursuits will require special facilities, programs, opportunities or locations?

8. Will you need any special support services? (study skills, counseling, handicap services, etc.)

9. Would you enjoy living in a different part of the country?

How often do you want to be able to come home? What region has good opportunities for internships & careers in your expected major?

10. What types of climates do you like?

11. Do you prefer.... a fast paced environment with something happening most of the time?..... an organized environment with lots of planned activities you can join? .... a relaxed environment where you can (or must) go your own way? .... a little of each?

## SEEK INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGES/ UNIVERSITIES

### Create Your 'Long List' Of Potential Colleges

There is no single "right college" for you. There are many that will provide a good fit for what is important to you. Begin now to identify college characteristics that fit with your own self-assessment. Keep your options broad at this point of your exploration.... As you gain information, both about yourself and about potential schools, you will be able to make more informed decisions about which college to apply to and where to enroll, if accepted.

Start the assessment/ exploration process early to give yourself more of a cushion and to expand your options. Reviewing the major characteristics outlined below is a first step in finding out which schools are possible matches and deserve further exploration.

Later in the section, you will find a more detailed list of characteristics. Narrow your search to no more than two dozen schools that seem to be early possibilities. This will serve as your "long list."

### Major Characteristics

#### Academic Fit

1. Schools vary in the degrees they award -- are you considering: Liberal Arts? Technical? Pre-Professional? Vocational? 2-year or 4-year? Public or Private? College or University?
2. Is your probable major offered?
3. Which undergraduate degrees are offered in your major?
4. Selectivity: What is the average SAT/ ACT for the school and the median GPA of the freshman class? (This can often tell you whether this is a place that will provide you enough challenge or simply create undue pressure.)

#### Environmental Fit

For residential students, choosing a college is much like finding a new home. You want to find a campus where you feel most comfortable and prepared for success. Consider: Size: total number of undergraduate students on campus Coed or single sex Student Body: national, international or regional Geographic region: including distance from home, travel costs and convenience and climate.

#### Affordability Fit

College costs are a major investment for most families. Factor in the cost for tuition and fees, room and board, books, personal expenses. Determine the percentage of students receiving need-based financial aid/ scholarships. Percent of students receiving merit-based financial aid/ scholarships.

Tuition and fees are important factors that are related to prestige, selectivity, region, and whether the school is public or private. Factor in "out of state" tuition costs if you leave Louisiana. It is important to have a frank discussion with your parents early in the process about what your family can afford to pay for college.

While working at the "long list" stage of the process however, cost alone should not rule out any college.

Consult your counselor early on, so that s/he can begin to look for special opportunities for you to consider.

### Where to Find Information about Colleges/ Universities

#### Start with your school counselor

Meet early on and often in your college search. Nothing pleases us more than sharing what we know to help you through this challenging yet rewarding process. We have a great deal of experience that we want you to



take advantage of. **If you have questions, don't wait for an invitation!** We want you to come by the office and schedule an appointment.

#### Check the internet

College Board is just one of many sites that has a great college search tool with lots of information about colleges that might be a good match for you: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>

#### Search College Websites

Colleges generally have a very polished presence on the internet. On these sites, you will be able to surf through catalogs, advice blogs or even photo tours, all while sitting at your own computer. Each site also provides a link or address to the admissions office. This is a quick way to get great information and begin to demonstrate your interest in a school.

#### College Guides, Catalogs and Reviews

College guidebooks (the big catalogs and reviews) can give you a good, quick source to answer questions and compare information across schools. These include contact information about admission officers, tuition, financial aid and other topics in a consistent format. Others can be found at libraries or bookstores.

Most review guides are all-inclusive, though some focus on specific regions, majors, religions, sports, etc. Look through several to get a feel for the differences – and be sure the guides you use are up-to-date.

#### Talk with teachers and parents

The adults in your life can be a wealth of information about various schools. Describe your interest in particular courses, majors and experiences. Talk with your teachers about careers and which colleges have the best career potential. Ditto for parents.

#### College Fairs

There are often several college fairs that take place each year. Some are by invitation; others are larger events held in downtown hotels. The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) holds annual college fairs with representatives from hundreds of colleges around the country and some international ones as well. You can check for dates and information on their website: <https://www.nacacfairs.org/>.

The plus of a college fair is that lots of different campuses from across the country are represented. The minus is that lots of students and parents attend and the scene can be sometimes chaotic. For that reason, we recommend going to the evening session. It will be much less crowded then.

The best way to approach a college fair is to be organized.

- Decide in advance which schools you would like to explore
- Write down questions you need to ask the representatives
- Carry a pen and notebook to take notes about what you learn

#### College Reps

Each fall, several college representatives schedule visits to ULS. Unlike college fairs, these visits give you a more intimate opportunity to hear about a college and ask more detailed questions. These representatives are your liaisons to the school. By meeting with them, you provide an important opportunity for them to put a name and face to your application.

A listing of these can be found on the ULS Counseling Services website. Check the information regularly as opportunities may quickly arise. Students must use the link found on the [ULS Counseling Services](#) website to register for these presentations at least one day in advance. Students are also responsible for all work missed.

#### Information Programs and Receptions offered locally

Many colleges and universities host special evening programs or receptions during the fall to promote their schools. These events are typically held at a local hotel and are open to juniors and seniors from area high schools. Frequently there will be members of both the admissions staff and local alumni. Occasionally, a current student from the school will also be there to make a presentation or answer questions. You can expect the format to be a video/ slide presentation followed by an in-depth question and answer period. Snacks and soft drinks are often served.

#### Conversations with Alumni and Currently Enrolled Students

Alumni who live in the Baton Rouge area can be a great source of information. Some schools have teams trained to give interviews and talk with students. You may know some ULS graduates who attend a college or university that is appealing to you. Contact them via email and try to meet either by phone or over a holiday break. They can give you an insider's view of the college.

#### College Campus Visits and Tours

Nothing can replace your own firsthand experience of a college campus. A personal visit gives you a firm understanding of the opportunities that a college may offer, and it is the surest way to gain a sense of how you would feel as a member of that community; it allows you to peek below the surface presented in viewbooks, guides and presentations. More specifics on campus visits is presented in a later section of this handbook.

#### Snail Mail

You probably already have a pile of mail from colleges that want you to consider them in your search. There may be a good reason to do so. Sort your mail into Yes, No and Maybe piles. Reply to the Yes and Maybe schools. Keep a simple tally sheet of each school's name or initials and the reasons for your Yes/ No decision. Include the earliest deadline for admission or financial aid for schools of interest.

Set up a file for each college you are considering. Use "The Crate Method" – with a big pocket folder, file box or milk crate type hanging file system from an office supply store. Include a profile cover sheet to keep track of all requirements, deadlines and materials needed, along with copies of all submitted paperwork. This will help you keep track of your progress with each school.

#### Contact the Colleges Directly

For every college on your "long list", and any colleges you are curious about or which you think may meet your major criteria, reach out and contact them directly by reply card, phone, website, or e-mail. Get the information you need to best make choices and best present yourself. It's free and there is no obligation. You do not have to wait until you are sure you want to apply. Do it now.

You can find a college's contact information (address and name/title of the head of admissions) in our files, or on the college's website. Request admissions information, financial aid details and an application form. Keep a brief record of all requests/contacts in your journal/crate files: include date, contact person's name &

position, what you asked for or talked about, and what they mentioned or seemed interested in. Do this consistently, because you will be talking to a lot of people and it is easy to forget what has been said and been done.

Even though you may find information in the catalogs we have at ULS or on the internet, it is still important that you contact the colleges yourself, because:

- Colleges prefer students who demonstrate that they are mature enough to act for themselves.
- Schools cannot recruit you if they don't know you're interested – and interest is key!
- Some of our material may be old. You need the latest admissions and financial aid forms.

If the school contacts you first, it may help you later in financial aid negotiations. Start your letter with a “Thank you for sending me...” line. Always keep in mind that the people you are contacting are adults. Practice the usual courtesies of respect and neatness, and clear speech. Spell check too! NO “TEXT-EZE.”

[College Name]

[College Address]

Dear Dr./Dean/Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ [or if unknown, use: Ladies and Gentlemen]

Thank you for sending me [brochure, letter...]. I am interested in beginning studies in [possible major(s)] at [university] in the fall of \_\_\_\_\_ and would appreciate it if you could send me your current undergraduate general catalog, and all necessary admissions and financial aid applications.

I will graduate from the LSU Laboratory School (190-245) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in May of \_\_\_\_\_. My interests, activities are in the areas of \_\_\_\_\_. Please let me know if there are similar opportunities at [university].

Sincerely,

[Student’s full name]

[Student’s phone number]

[Student’s e-mail address]

## Focus Your College List

- Assemble a profile of each college on your list to find those that best match your needs and wants
- Decide which of the factors below are important to you and develop an ideal college profile.
- Using your research, compare your 'long list' of schools to your ideal profile to decide which deserve closer investigation, visits, and ultimately, an application for admission. See sample profile sheet.
- Major factors will likely have already been answered by your preliminary research. Other answers may only be available from speaking with current students, such as a tour guide or recent alumnus.

## Student Enrollment Characteristics

- **ENROLLMENT**
  - Total number of undergraduate students on campus.
- **RETENTION**
  - Percent of freshmen who return for their sophomore year
  - Percent of freshmen who ultimately graduate
  - Percent of freshmen who graduate within four years (or less)
- **TYPES OF STUDENTS**
  - Selectivity (SAT and GPA ranges)
  - Percent of commuters/ residents
  - Geographic vs. regional diversity of student body
  - Coed vs single sex.
  - Male/ Female ratio Diversity/ homogeneity of student body
  - Percentage of minority students
  - Percent with need-based financial aid
  - Percent of applicants admitted (lower vs. more selective)
  - Average SAT/ ACT scores and GPA of freshman class
  - Freshman class profile

## Location and Surroundings

- **LOCATION**
  - Geographic region
  - Distance from home
  - Travel costs and convenience
  - Economy and industry (jobs) in the area
- **SETTING**
  - Climate: number of outdoor days, how long and cold is the winter?
  - Urban/rural, Nearest city/nearest countryside
  - Recreation opportunities that interest me
  - Cultural opportunities that interest me
  - Appearance, age and maintenance of surrounding community
  - Crime statistics of area

## College Type and Philosophy

- **TYPE**
  - 2yr/ 4 yr.
  - Public/ Private
  - College/ University

- **PURPOSE**
  - Liberal Arts/ Pre-professional (bus, med, ed., sci., eng.)/ Vo-Tech
  - Undergraduate and Graduate degrees offered
  - Undergraduate internships, research, student work offered in my field.
- **PHILOSOPHY**
  - Traditional or Experimental
  - Deeply scholarly or career focused
  - Heritage or special traditions
- **CALENDAR YEAR**
  - Semester
  - Trimester
  - Quarter
- **OVERALL**
  - General reputation
  - Quality as compared to cost
  - Alumni accomplishments

#### Academic Requirements

- **Required freshman courses**
  - Core-curriculum
  - Major requirements
  - AP/DE/IB Credits accepted
- **COURSES OFFERED**
  - Breadth and depth of courses in my major and department
  - Quality and reputation in my major Interdisciplinary courses
  - Strongest departments
- **INDEPENDENT STUDY**
  - Individual Tutorials
  - Seminars
  - Opportunities for research
  - Can students assist in significant (grad level) research?
- **SPECIAL PROGRAMS**
  - International programs
  - Internships, cooperative work/ study programs, fieldwork
  - Joint-degree programs; double majors, minors, etc.
  - Combined Undergraduate/ Graduate program
  - Pre-professional programs
- **STANDARDS**
  - Accreditation of college
  - Accreditation of major department or professional program
  - Degree requirements
  - Grading system/ Honors system

## Academic Environment

- **FACULTY**
  - Fully staffed? (financial strength of institution)
  - Percentage with PhD's – number of Nobel Laureates, etc.
  - Emphasis on research or teaching
  - Faculty course load each semester
  - Number of freshmen and core courses taught by grad students or teaching assistants (TAs)
- **FACULTY – STUDENT**
  - Faculty/ Student ratio
  - Ranges of class sizes in freshman year and in later years
  - Opportunities for discussion or exchange of ideas within the classroom
  - Faculty advising system
  - Number of office hours per week
  - Faculty involvement in student life
- **ACADEMIC DEMANDS**
  - Workload, course expectations
  - Types of assignments
  - Academic pressure or competition
- **INTELLECTUAL VITALITY**
  - Student attitudes toward learning interest in political, social or world issues
  - Community service opportunities or requirements
- **CAREER PREP**
  - Pre-professional programs
  - Direct link to graduate program?
  - Percentage of my major who go on to graduate/ professional schools
  - Accreditation and reputation of program
- **CAREER AIDS**
  - Career advising and information
  - Job Placement program.
  - On-campus recruiting
  - Employment rate (and salaries) upon graduation

## Campus & Student Life

- **FACILITIES**
  - Quality of main library, number of books, number of periodicals
  - Labs and classrooms
  - Computer facilities Athletic facilities Recreational facilities
  - Student Life Center
  - Appearance, age and maintenance of campus
  - Transportation around campus
  - Security arrangement and campus crime statistics
- **CAMPUS COMMUNITY**
  - Student organizations
  - Liberal/ directive/ restrictive social regulations
  - Spirit of competitiveness
  - Student involvement

- HOUSING
  - Percent living on-campus for freshman year or in later years
  - On-campus housing mandatory for freshmen?
  - On-campus housing guaranteed for freshmen?
  - Large dorms/ housing clusters/ houses
  - Availability of single rooms/ doubles/ suites/ apartments
  - Roommate selection (and change) process
  - Co-ed buildings? Co-ed floors? Co-ed rooms? Co-ed bathrooms?
  - Housing quality, quantity, location and proximity to classes'
  - On-line computer access from residence halls?
- DINING
  - Centralized/ decentralized dining
  - Dining plan options. Fast food options in dining plan? Where can I eat on Sundays?
  - Alternative food sources on or near campus
- CAMPUS ACTIVITIES
  - Prominent campus organizations
  - Social life Greek systems
  - Religious, ethnic or cultural groups
  - Community service opportunities or requirements
  - Opportunities to participate in or attend: intermural athletics, leisure recreation, cultural events
  - Organized indoor and outdoor recreation activities

#### Application Requirements

- REQUIRED PIECES
  - Application fee
  - Informational/ biographical forms for admission
  - High school transcript and secondary school report
  - Essays and other personal information
  - Letters of Recommendation
  - Interview, if required
- FORMS
  - Forms for honors
  - Forms for housing
  - Forms for specific grants and scholarships
- TEST SCORES
  - SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT
- DEADLINES
  - Application deadlines for admission, housing, financial aid, programs
  - Notifications dates

#### Admissions Requirements

- COSTS
  - Student budget for tuition and fees
  - Room and board, books, personal expenses
  - Travel costs
- FINANCIAL AID

- Percent of students receiving financial aid/ scholarships based on need
- Percent of students receiving financial aid/ scholarships based on merit
- Range of award amounts
- Loan expectations and other financing options
- Student Work/ Study or job expectations
- Federal/ State/ Institution forms required
- FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- CSS (College Scholarship Service)



## THE CAMPUS VISIT

At this point, your college profile list is probably based upon information you've gained from paper and electronic research and local contacts. As you focus your list and become more interested in a smaller set of schools, consider making a campus visit. This will allow you to:

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

### When to Visit

While most admission offices are open year-round, the best time to visit is during the fall/ spring while classes are in session. During the regular school term, you'll be assured of seeing students and faculty going about their daily lives - which will give you a better feeling for the atmosphere of the community.

If you happen to visit during the summer, plan to make a return trip to your top choices. Mardi Gras or Spring Break of your junior year are excellent times to see several schools. Some students opt of apply to schools and only visit once they have been admitted. This option may help you with your final decision.

Many colleges host special visitation days throughout the year. These programs allow you to meet and talk with many different members of the college community within a short period of time. The program may include an overnight stay in a residence hall and the opportunity to attend class. Call the admission office to ask about future dates for Junior and Senior Days.

### Before you Visit

Always contact the school at least two weeks in advance of your planned visit date and let them know your areas of interest, both academic and extracurricular. This will help them be able to plan a more meaningful visit for you. During this time, you should ask to speak with an admissions counselor, either as part of a group information session or in an individual interview. (check to see if an individual interview is a required as part of the admissions process.)

All colleges offer guided campus tours, and many can set you up with housing, sitting in on a class, and appointments with faculty, coaches or activity leaders. Spend as much time on campus as you can – at least a half day – though a more thorough, well-planned visit may take up to 1 1/2 days.

It's always a good idea to check that you have good directions to the admissions office and know the protocol for visitor parking. You don't want to make a bad impression by arriving late, so keep the admission office phone number handy.

When arranging your visit, schedule as many of the following as you can:

- Take advantage of the typical admissions visit; talk with a counselor, take the campus tour, attend classes (preferably a freshman level and an upper-level class)
- Meet with a professor in your expressed area of interest

- Eat a meal in the campus dining facility
- Speak with coaches/ advisors of the extracurricular activities that interest you
- Spend a night in the residence hall
- Plan to bring a notebook to write down the names of people you meet and to capture impressions.

### The Campus Visit

The goal of visiting any college campus is to learn more about that school and to help the admissions officers learn more about you. Be prepared to ask questions that are important to you – and to answer any questions that you are asked. Admissions offices run on a tight schedule, so it is important to be on time. If there is any chance you will be running late or must postpone your visit, give them a call.

During your visit, pick up a campus newspaper and scan for information. Investigate the library, the study areas and the student activities center. Attend a campus athletic or arts event.

### The Individual Interview

You should know in advance whether an individual interview is a required part of the admissions process – at some schools it is a critical evaluation piece, at others, it is simply an opportunity to get to learn more about you and to answer any questions you might have.

The interview also gives you a chance to evaluate the school's fit and to resolve any questions you might have about college costs, financial aid opportunities and your chances of success.

#### Interview Tips:

- Give yourself adequate time to get to the appointment – you want to get there a bit early so that you can relax and be yourself.
- Deliberately make eye contact and speak clearly – no mumbling!
- Prepare a list of questions that deal with your particular needs, but not questions that could be answered by simply looking at the school catalog. Show that you have done some research; this demonstrates your interest in the school. Be sure to mention anything in your background or achievements that you feel the admissions office needs to know.

Below are some typical interview questions. Practice your answers so that you can quickly demonstrate what you have to offer:

#### Self-Awareness

1. What are your strengths and your weaknesses?
2. What is one thing you would like to change about yourself?
3. What adjective would your friends use to describe you?
4. Why do you think you were chosen/ elected for \_\_\_ position?
5. If I were to visit ULS, what would I learn about your role in the school community?
6. What sets you apart as an individual at ULS?
7. What societal pressures do you feel operating on you to conform?
8. Describe ways in which you and your friends “go your own way.”
9. Describe the student population at ULS.
10. If you were Principal for a day, what would you change?

## Community

1. Describe your community.
2. Have you been involved in special events/ programs that impacted the community?

## College

1. Where are you in your college selection process?
2. What type of college or university are you looking for? (describe the qualities in terms of how they relate to the school you're interviewing with at the time.)
3. How did you become interested in \_\_\_ College/ University?

## Global

1. What social issues concern you the most?
2. If you were President of the U.S., what social policy would you address?

## Diversity and Depth of Interest

1. Describe your extracurricular activities and interests.
2. Which activity means the most to you?
3. How did you become involved in \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What are your most meaningful accomplishments?
5. Which activities do you plan to continue in college?
6. Are there any activities that you haven't been able to pursue in HS?
7. What leadership positions have you held?

## Level of Intellectual Depth and Development

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

## Creativity

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

## The Group Information Session

Most campus visits should include attendance at a scheduled group information session. These typically include a formal presentation from an admissions office with details about the admissions and financial aid processes.

Often you will gain unexpected insights when others pose questions you hadn't considered. Be sure to introduce yourself to the admissions officer after the session and go prepared to ask questions.

#### Academic

1. How often are classes taught by professors vs. teaching assistants?
2. What are your largest class sizes?
3. What is average? How are most classes structured?
4. Lecture vs. discussion?
5. How would you describe the relationship between faculty and students?
6. Does faculty keep regular office hours for students to stop in and talk?
7. I'm interested in study-abroad, what options do you offer?
8. Do you have an honor code? How does it truly work?

#### Campus Life

1. Describe the social life on campus.
2. What do students do for fun?
3. How is security on the campus? In the community?
4. Describe the resident hall set-up?
5. How are roommates selected?
6. What support services exist to help students academically and personally?
7. When you read an application, what are the top five things you are looking for?
8. Describe the process for applying for need-based or merit-based scholarships.

#### The Campus Tour

Student surveys consistently show that the campus tour is the most important, most memorable aspect of any college visit. The tour gives you a chance to see what it really means to be a student there. Typically, a current student guide will walk you through campus and many of the buildings. You will likely see the residence and dining areas, as well as the academic and recreational facilities. This is your opportunity to ask a student specific questions about his/ her experience – it isn't the time to ask questions about admissions but do ask about their area of study and career plans. Find out about student activities, living conditions and class experiences. Keep in mind that the tour guide's experiences and impressions are just one person's perspective. Never judge a school solely on your tour experience.

#### Visiting Classes

Visiting a class can give you a first-hand impression of the structure and size of the educational experience at a particular college. It lets you witness the level of student/ faculty interaction, gauge the challenge of the coursework and get a feel for the caliber of the student body. Check with the admissions office to see a list of available classes and choose one in your area of interest.

#### Meet with an Academic Department Head/ Faculty Member

Some universities provide an opportunity to meet with faculty, either in a separate interview or right after a class visit. Ask about:

- Programs/ opportunities that set the school apart from their competition
- Placement record for graduates in your field of study
- Internships/ Co-ops/ Research opportunities for undergraduate students

### Study Bulletin Boards

It may seem funny, but bulletin boards provide an important means of community on a college campus and can provide an incredible window into issues being discussed, events that are taking place and all sorts of opportunities that are available. While wandering through academic and student life buildings, don't overlook faculty office areas— this is where students sign up for more important academic and professional activities beyond the classroom.

### Visit with Coaches/ Activity Directors/ Other members of the community

In order to best assess a school's "out of class" fit, review your list of desired activities (both those you wish to continue and any new areas you want to consider exploring.) Plan to talk with the people in charge of those areas to gain more specific information. If they aren't available during your visit, get their name and phone numbers and contact them later.

ALWAYS be sure to send a follow-up thank you note. Remember, the admissions committee wants a well-rounded student body and activity directors often signal their interest/ need for certain types of students. It pays to be assertive here.

### Talk with Students

Throughout your visit, talk to as many current students as possible. You may meet students while visiting a class or spending an overnight, but you should also approach students you see on campus.

Ask specific questions such as:

1. How much study time is necessary for success?
2. How is the food in the dining hall?"
3. What do you think of campus life and what social/ recreational activities are well-attended? Why did you choose \_\_\_\_\_ College?
4. What makes it distinctive?
5. What would you change about it?
6. What would you fight to keep unchanged?
7. What are the major campus issues?

### Spend the night in a Residence Hall

If you have a friend at the school you can stay with, or if the admissions office can schedule an overnight with a student host, these types of visits are the best way to really understand student life and opportunities outside the classroom. Be aware that you will probably sleep on the floor; Bring a pillow and sleeping bag. Check to see if you should bring anything else, as well.

### Eat in the Dining Hall

Where and what you eat during your four years of college makes this a key decision point. Explore the options by eating a meal in the dining hall and getting a snack in the student union.

### Attend Special Events

If you notice any athletic events, concerts, theater performances or speakers taking place while you are on campus, choose as many as you can possibly fit into your visit schedule. College is a rare and wonderful opportunity to take advantage of free/ low cost events. Check out what is possible.

## After the Visit

You may visit several schools on a single college search trip, and it is easy for your impressions to all run together by the end. Immediately after you leave a school, while your thoughts are still fresh, write down your impressions. Be sure to note both what you liked and disliked.

Jot down any questions that you forgot to ask and plan to follow-up with the people you met.

Write thank you notes to anyone who took time to help you or answer questions. If you talked with coaches, faculty, or administrators politely ask them to send a note to the admissions committee. Include your full name, etc. Thank and compliment student hosts, if you stayed overnight (admissions will probably ask them their opinion and their sense about your interest in the school.)

And if the school provides an evaluation, take the time to fill it out. Again, showing interest is crucial to being admitted.

## Questions to ask yourself

1. What was your first reaction?
2. How does the campus “feel” to you?
3. Do students take pride in the campus and show school spirit?
4. Are the facilities adequate in your area of interest? How up-to-date is the equipment?
5. Is the library/ study area inviting?
6. Are computers available and easily accessible?
7. Are freshman guaranteed housing?
8. Do you have a choice in the type of living environment?
9. What are the dining options and are meal contracts required?
10. Do the “out of class” opportunities excite you?
11. Do they suit your needs (religious, Greek system, intramurals, cultural, service, etc.)?
12. If you have health concerns, are services easily available?
13. Is a car an asset or liability on this campus?
14. Is it accessible by bus, plane, train?
15. Are campus jobs available?

## DECIDING WHERE AND WHEN TO APPLY

Applications are made up of a lot of moving parts: application forms, transcripts, counselor/ teacher recommendations, etc. In order to complete your application on time (an absolutely necessary requirement), each of these pieces needs to be in place WELL BEFORE the college deadline. Set yourself up for success.

In the fall of your senior year, it is important to narrow down your list of potential colleges and determine which you will apply to. If you've done your research, talked frequently with your counselors and parents, asked tough questions and made campus visits, the final process of narrowing should become fairly easy. Be sure to consult with your parents about your choices and the financial consequences – and remember there are application fees involved.

At this point some new questions typically emerge:

1. How many applications should I submit?
2. We strongly urge that you send no more than 6-8 applications.
3. What do colleges need to know about me?
4. How likely am I to be seriously considered for admission?
5. What is the applicant pool like this year?
6. Is it competitive across the country?
7. What can I do to improve my prospects with the schools that have impressed me?

Remember, you're not trying to narrow the list to a single school, but rather to a targeted set of possibilities that would serve your needs/ hopes. Don't bother to apply to schools that you wouldn't attend. Instead, develop a range of schools that include a Safety School, Target Schools, and a Reach School.

### Safety School

Among your choices should be a safety school where you have well above a 50% chance of being admitted. Examine the raw statistics of median SAT/ ACT scores and median GPA in the profile of last year's entering class. While your safety school may not be your first choice, it needs to be a place where you would be happy attending. It should offer everything that your dream school offers and be one that you can afford. This is the hardest school to select.

### Target School

Choose a couple of target schools where you have a 50/50 chance of being admitted. Note: While your statistics may match the school's profile target and you think your chances of being admitted are good, realize that in any given year a school's applicant pool may change and it may become more or less selective than in the past. Also remember that admission officers look beyond these numbers as they shape their first-year class.

### Reach School

Everyone has a school they like where their scores and GPA fall below the median for the freshman profile. Although you may have less than a 50% chance of being admitted, it is alright to set high goals and apply to one reach school. If you approach this realistically, you can rejoice if you are admitted but shouldn't feel devastated if you aren't.

## Application Deadline Options

Colleges offer several different sets of deadlines for admission/ financial aid/ etc. REVIEW CAREFULLY and consider the implications of each.

### Regular Decision

This is the deadline to be considered for general admission.

Common deadlines are January 1st and 15th, February 1st and 15th, or March 1st.

Schools typically notify you by April 15th and you must respond to offers by May 1st. Confirm all dates with each college.

### Early Decision

Generally due by end of October....but check your college's date. This involves a binding commitment which means that if admitted you are obliged to accept and to pay the deposit, usually within two weeks.

**Advantages:** The College gives you a closer look in a much smaller applicant pool. You are sending a message that they are your top choice. If deferred at this point, there is no longer any binding commitment and your application will be looked at again in the spring as part of the regular applicant pool. At that time, additional letters and essays can be submitted and corrective action taken. In the meantime, be sure to apply to additional schools.

**Disadvantages:** You can't change your mind. You often get less consideration for financial aid, since the school knows that you are committed to the college regardless of their offer. You need a solid, early understanding of the college. The percentage of an incoming college class that comes from Early Decision applicants can range from 15% to over 30% among schools. Higher percentages occur at the most selective schools and recent trends there are sharply upward.

### Early Action

Usually apply before November 1st, though deadlines vary by college. Unlike Early Decision, you are not bound to accept an offer of admission and may apply elsewhere at the same time. With Early Action, you stand on your record of achievement through junior year. Schools *typically* notify you by mid-December and you must reply by May 1st.

### Rolling Admission

In this case, the college reads, processes and notifies students continuously as applications arrive. Admission closes when the desired class size is reached (typically when the number of offers sent out is 3-4X the desired final class size.)

At colleges that use rolling admission (i.e. many state universities), it is to your advantage to apply as early as possible.

### Early Admission

This is for juniors who want to attend college before finishing high school. Early Admission is reserved for truly exceptional students whose academic preparation and achievement level are sufficient for early entrance into college.

**Caution! An application deadline typically means the application must be postmarked by a specific date; however, some schools require that the application be in hand by that date.**



### Gather all the materials for your “short list” of schools

It is very easy to lose track of details when you have so many pieces of paper and so many deadlines. For this reason, it is critical that you keep a file containing all essays, your activity sheet/ resume and all documentation about when electronic applications were submitted. Remember the crate method. Occasionally materials will get lost in cyberspace or are misfiled by a college admissions office, so get yourself organized and keep track of everything. Even when credit/ debit cards are charged.

## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The first step in the process is to review your short list of colleges and pull together specific materials/ items you will need for each.

Allow yourself enough time to prepare a carefully written, thoughtful and neat application. Don't rush the process! The care you take to answer questions, check spelling and follow instructions is crucial.

### Application Types: Common App vs School Specific

Determine whether the schools on your short list accept the [Common Application](#) or whether they have a school-specific process. The Common App is accepted by more than 500 college and universities across the country, so after August 1st of your Senior Year, go to their website ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)) and create an account.

### Transcript and Mid-Year Report Deadlines

Transcript request must be turned in at least 20 working days prior to your deadline. You may request your transcript through the ULS website – but don't wait until the deadline.

### Standardized Tests

Standardized tests, such as the SAT/ ACT, are a critical component of the application review for schools. Know which test each college requires and register for tests on time. When you register for the tests, fill out the Student Descriptive Questionnaire and request that your scores be sent to each college. This will prompt schools to send a variety of college and scholarship program information.

### Teacher (& Others) Recommendation Letters

LSU requires at least one teacher recommendation. The counselor recommendation is optional. Submit the **Letter of Recommendation Form (see appendix)**. Ask teachers who know you well and who have taught you during high school to write a recommendation for you. Provide them with the information they request to help them write a thorough and compelling letter. **Be sure to give them at least 10 school days to write the recommendation.**

You can have the same teacher write recommendations for all your college applications – While the initial letter writing may be time-consuming, they may be able to adapt their letter to the individual needs of the school. Additionally, you can request recommendations from employers, community members, athletic coaches or club sponsors – anyone who knows you well.

### The College Essay

Consider the essay your handshake and introduction to a college – it shapes the impression they have about who you are, what is important to you, how well you write and what special qualities you would bring to their incoming class.

Your essay brings you to life; it fills in the personality behind your test scores and grades. It allows the Admissions Officer to imagine you as a person – which is especially important if you were not able to have a personal interview. And it can show how you are different from other applicants with the same scores and qualifications.

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

#### What are they looking for?

A snapshot of how you think when you are engaged with an idea or have an experience that gives you the answer to “what has this 17-year old learned from life, given his/her opportunities?” Write an honest, true-to-self, uncontrived account.

#### Who are the readers?

The harsh life of an admissions officer in winter: 20- 25 folders to be read each day; at a brisk 15 minutes each, that is almost a full day. At a more thoughtful 20 – 30 minutes per application, s/he will be up well into the night. If yours is the one s/he selects at 10:30pm, it had better be compelling! Good admissions people try to come to each folder fresh, as if it were the first but be aware of the context. You will get fair treatment, but you will be one of many.

#### How to write our essays

How long should it be? There is not a magic length. If no length is specified in the instructions, plan on no more than two pages, typed and double-spaced. Should I do it if an essay is optional? Yes, yes, yes. Without question.

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

Something that is important and meaningful to you will give you a chance to shine and will draw in the reader. Ask yourself; what is the one thing I am most enthusiastic about? Then share your answer in a way that makes the reader feel your excitement.

#### Sample Essay Questions

1. Help us to know you better.
2. Describe your own personal philosophy of leadership.
3. Describe the social issue of greatest concern to you.
4. If you could spend an evening with a historical figure, who would that be? Why?
5. What person has had the greatest impact on your life?
6. Please describe an intellectual experience that has engaged or challenged you.
7. Pose the question you wish we had asked and then give your answer.

#### Good things to have in an essay

A sense of immediacy. Note the difference between: “I went to Latin America last summer” vs. “As I stepped off the bus into the wet heat of the small town, I thought to myself, “What have I done?” In other words, don’t distance yourself from the reader.

Specifics: Be as precise as you can be, especially in response to the common question “Why do you want to come to our school?” Rather than just making a statement such as “I like kids” describe what it is you like about them and why.

Honesty: Write it for yourself first and let the essay come from your heart.

### Some Don'ts to Consider:

- Don't repeat what is said elsewhere in your application. If you list activities in your application, for instance, don't list them again in your essay. Answer the "SO WHAT?" question: Write about why you are involved in them and the difference you made.
- Don't wait until the night before an essay must be sent to write it. This is an important piece of your application and if you don't care, honestly why should the overworked reader care?
- Don't write an academic essay unless you are asked for one.
- Don't leave the reader with unanswered questions.
- Don't be overly formal in tone. Invite the reader in.
- Don't write poetry.
- Don't rely on a gimmick instead of doing the work. Trust us – the reader has seen your gimmick hundreds of times and won't be impressed.

### How do I start?

- Brainstorm ideas
- Focus on a topic and dig deep. Draft in a conversational tone.
- Read it aloud
- Let someone else critique it
- Revise, but don't lose your personal style
- Proof read it! Make sure it is free of typos and errors

During your senior year, you'll have an opportunity to work on your essay during school and have others offer suggestions during English class. Take the advice of your teacher and peers to heart and incorporate it into your final product.

### Who is Responsible for What?

#### **The student is responsible for:**

1. Submitting a Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire (see appendix) to the person writing the letter at least 10 school days in advance.
3. Submitting a transcript requests at least 10 school days before the due date.
4. Writing your essay
5. Sending applications (including admission, honors, financial aid, housing, etc.) to colleges
6. Paying application fees
7. Submitting official test scores (if college wasn't already listed on test registration form)
8. Completing CSS Profile (optional) and/ or FAFSA forms (with parent's help.)

#### **The school counselor is responsible for:**

1. Sending an official transcript, school profile electronically
2. Writing a counselor recommendation letter upon request. LSU does not require a counselor's recommendation.

#### **The teacher is responsible for:**

1. Writing and submitting student recommendations upon request

## COLLEGE COSTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

### The Cost of College

Your college education will be one of the largest investments you make in your lifetime, and the process of applying for admission, scholarships, need-based aid and loans can be complex and confusing. In October of each year, your counselors will meet with parents to discuss Financial Aid and College Costs.

As a quick primer, college costs fall into two categories: fixed and controllable.

- Fixed costs include: tuition, room & board and student fees.
- Controllable costs include: books & materials, lab fees, personal expenses and transportation.

In addition to these, you can expect costs related to the college search, such as standardized test fees, AP exams, application fees and transcript fees. Factor in the cost of college visits (optional.)

### Some Anticipated Expenses for Applying to College

Standardized tests: (includes test, registration fee, additional report fees)

Application fees for colleges: \$50 - \$90 each. There may be a reduced fee for registering online.

FAFSA – free

CSS/ Financial Aid Profile (optional): over \$40, plus additional \$20+ for each college receiving the report.

Travel Expenses: visits to colleges are optional, but very helpful. Hundreds of dollars.

Note: You must budget your time, as well as your money, when applying to colleges. Investigating schools during your junior year will help you narrow your applications.

### Determining Your Financial Need

In analyzing your need, colleges look at something termed Expected Family Contribution (EFC.) This is the financial aid term for the amount that students and their parents might reasonably be expected to contribute toward college costs. It includes a calculation of Available Income, Assets and Anticipated Tax Rates.

The goals of EFC estimations are:

- Consistency: to expect similar amounts from families in similar circumstances
- Progressivity: to expect proportionally greater or lesser amounts from families that are in stronger or weaker financial positions.

Formulas are established to estimate your ability to pay, relative to other applicants. Don't assume that just because a neighbor didn't qualify for need-based aid that you won't either. Or that since your family's income is above a certain arbitrary level, that you won't be eligible.

### How do I know what my EFC is?

Parents are often surprised by their EFC numbers; but paying attention to what you will be expected to contribute, more than the actual costs of college, is the right question to ask. Below is a simplified calculation of what your family might be expected to contribute.

### How does EFC relate to financial aid eligibility?

The EFC calculation is used to determine an estimate of your "demonstrated financial need" as an offset to the cost of attending a particular college; the idea being that what a family can reasonably afford (the EFC) remains the same regardless of the college cost. Therefore, your need will be greater at a more expensive institution than at a lower priced school.

Example: Assume your EFC calculation is \$15,000. How does this translate into "need" at different colleges?

	COLLEGE A	COLLEGE B	COLLEGE C
Total Cost of Attendance:	\$45,000	\$25,000	\$15,000
Less your EFC:	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Financial Need:	\$30,000	\$10,000	\$0

You are generally eligible for aid equal to the amount of your demonstrated financial need. However, the amount of actual aid you receive depends very much on how much aid is available and very few colleges/ universities will meet 100% of your need.

There are several ways to pay for your education, based upon your individual situation. Research what is out there and take advantage of the financial aid staff at the colleges you are considering. Let them, and the ULS counselors, help you through the web of forms, policies and procedures. If you don't understand something, ask!

### Types of Financial Aid

There are several basic ways to find and receive financial aid that can help you pay for school:

- Grants
- Loans
- Scholarships
- Work study

### FAFSA/ CSS

To be considered for Federal Student Aid Programs (i.e. Federal Pell Grants and Family Education Loans), your family will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This form is online and can be found at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

If you plan to apply for institutional aid, you may be required to use the CSS PROFILE form or a college specific financial aid application. The CSS can be found on the College Board website at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). The PROFILE form does not determine eligibility, but merely reports your financial situation to schools and programs that use their own formulas for determining aid. This approach probes more deeply into a family's financial condition and special circumstances. As an example, the institutional method includes home equity in the asset calculation, while the federal methodology does not.

These forms can be complicated and will require information about your family's financial resources and expected contribution. All information that you submit will be treated confidentially.

### Other

Beyond these options, you can also investigate other areas of support, such as TOPS (for in-state and common market schools), private scholarship programs and aid from the colleges themselves in the form of merit scholarships.

Always be aware of any special terms connected with an aid offer – i.e. maintenance of a minimum GPA, continued involvement in a specific major, etc.

## Helpful Hints and Practical Ideas

Filling out financial aid forms can be a somewhat overwhelming process; however, the FAFSA4caster is a great way to estimate your family's contribution. Go to <https://fafsa.ed.gov/spa/fafsa4c/#/landing>. Also, be aware that almost every college and university will have a "net price calculator" on their own website. These calculators can help you get a more accurate estimate of expected costs for attending their school – but remember, these are just estimates.

**Submit Early.** Estimate your parents' 1040 before Christmas to allow for last minute strategies. The FAFSA should be signed, dated and postmarked as soon as possible after January 1st. Complete your returns as early in the year as possible; April 15th is often too late. Often campus jobs and loans require you to have filed the FAFSA. Don't eliminate yourself from sources of aid by not filing. Also, some FAFSA money is first come – first served, so do not delay.

**Use accurate information.** Avoid having to submit corrected documentation later. It is time-consuming and can cause delays in consideration of your aid application. Your federal tax returns are your best financial reference for completing need-based applications. Using estimates from the previous year can be a good idea if you expect your income to be similar to previous years.

**Keep a copy of everything you submit at a school or agency.** This includes applications for admission, aid, loans and scholarships, as well as all the letters, essays and grade reports you send.

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

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

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

**Eligibility for need-based aid is not set in stone from year to year.** If your family circumstances change, such as a parent losing a job or becoming seriously ill, additional help may be available. ASK! If you receive need-based aid, you must reapply for assistance each year. Certain scholarships also may require annual re-application. In most instances, the "self-help" portion of a student's need-based aid package (job and loan) will increase from one year to the next.

# COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

## Junior Year

### October

- Email colleges for information
- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Schedule campus tours during fall break. Make sure the college you are visiting is in session. Use the College Comparison Worksheet to gather information (**see appendix**).
- Take the PSAT at ULS. We will register you for this test.
- Schedule college rep visits to ULS (continue to monitor fall semester as list is frequently updated). Check the schedule on the ULS Counseling Services website: <https://ulscounseling.weebly.com/college-rep-visits.html>
- Meet with the School Counselor for your annual credit evaluation. The Counselor will schedule this with you.

### November

- Email colleges for information
- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Schedule campus tours during Thanksgiving break. Make sure the college you are visiting is in session. Use the College Comparison Worksheet to gather information (**see appendix**).
- Schedule college rep visits to ULS (continue to monitor fall semester as list is frequently updated). Check the schedule on the ULS Counseling Services website: <https://ulscounseling.weebly.com/college-rep-visits.html>

### December

- Email colleges for information
- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Schedule campus tours during Winter Break. Make sure the college you are visiting is in session. Use the College Comparison Worksheet to gather information (**see appendix**).
- Schedule college rep visits to ULS (continue to monitor fall semester as list is frequently updated). Check the schedule on the ULS Counseling Services website: <https://ulscounseling.weebly.com/college-rep-visits.html>

### February

- Email colleges for information
- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Schedule campus tours during Mardi Gras break. Make sure the college you are visiting is in session. Use the College Comparison Worksheet to gather information (**see appendix**).
- Planning your courses for the upcoming school year. Remember colleges look for areas of interest and rigor.
- Update your Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). This will be sent home with course requests.

### March

- Email colleges for information



- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Take the ACT free at ULS. We register you for this administration only.
- Attend the Annual College Knowledge Night. Check the ULS website for date and time.

## April

- Email colleges for information
- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Begin writing a rough draft of application essays.
- Begin writing your resume (**see appendix**).
- Schedule campus tours during spring break. Make sure the college you are visiting is in session. Use the College Comparison Worksheet to gather information (**see appendix**).
- Check the ACT and SAT websites to register for upcoming tests.

## May

- Email colleges for information
- Research and/or apply for scholarships
- Begin writing a rough draft of application essays.
- Begin writing your resume (**see appendix**).
- Schedule campus tours during spring break. Make sure the college you are visiting is in session. Use the College Comparison Worksheet to gather information (**see appendix**).
- Check the ACT and SAT websites to register for upcoming tests.
- Plan summer activities that will reflect well on a college application

## Senior Year

### August/September

- Create a Calendar of Deadlines for things such as:
  - Application deadlines
  - Financial aid deadlines
  - Transcript request deadlines (high school and DE)
  - Scholarship deadlines
  - Interview appointments (if required)
  - Schedule college rep visits to ULS (continue to monitor fall semester as list is frequently updated).  
Check the schedule on the ULS Counseling Services website:  
<https://ulscounseling.weebly.com/college-rep-visits.html>
- Ensure all debts are paid as high school transcripts cannot be sent unless accounts are clear.
- Schedule any remaining college campus visits. Complete exempted absence request for these visits:  
[https://www.uhigh.lsu.edu/Portals/0/students/student\\_resources/K-12\\_Exempted\\_Absence\\_Request.pdf?ver=2019-08-23-124540-347](https://www.uhigh.lsu.edu/Portals/0/students/student_resources/K-12_Exempted_Absence_Request.pdf?ver=2019-08-23-124540-347)
- Juniors and seniors meet with counselor for their annual credit evaluation. Seniors, confirm you have all credits needed for graduation.
- List your top three college choices here  
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/Top3CollegeChoices>.
- Register for any ACT/SAT & SAT Subject Tests.
- Submit requests for transcripts to meet deadlines **at least 20 school days** in advance.
  - Use the form found under student resources on the school website:  
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/TranscriptRecordsRequest>
  - If the request is for the Common App or Coalition App, select “unofficial transcript” and have it sent to Kristy Gremillion at [kgremillion@lsu.edu](mailto:kgremillion@lsu.edu). It will then be uploaded to the application for you.
  - If the request is NOT for Common App or Coalition App, select “official transcript” and complete the information for the appropriate college/scholarship.
- Finalize your “short list” of colleges.
- Revise essay draft with English teachers.
- Attend program presentations when hosted by various colleges.
- Decide which decision plan you will use: Early Decision/ Early Action / Regular Decision. Confirm deadlines.
- Provide the teacher who will write your letters of recommendation with forms and resume. Include the deadline for each college. If postal mail is required, please provide an addressed/stamped envelope.
- If a counselor recommendation is required, please complete the Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire **(see appendix)**. This must be submitted **at least 15 school days prior** to the due date.
- Review application deadlines immediately, including admissions, honors, financial aid, special scholarships and housing. Call or email the colleges directly.
- Attend TOPS/FAFSA (Financial Aid) Night at ULS.
- Submit diploma form **(see appendix)**.
- Order graduation supplies—information from school will be provided.
- Seek and apply for scholarships.
- Register for National College Fair held in Baton Rouge.
- National Merit Semi-Finalists will be notified during this time.

## October

- FAFSA opens—submit your FAFSA sometime between October and February
- Submit requests for transcripts to meet deadlines **at least 20 school days** in advance.
  - Use the form found under student resources on the school website:  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/TranscriptRecordsRequest>
  - If the request is for the Common App or Coalition App, select “unofficial transcript” and have it sent to Kristy Gremillion at [kgremillion@lsu.edu](mailto:kgremillion@lsu.edu). It will then be uploaded to the application for you.
  - If the request is NOT for Common App or Coalition App, select “official transcript” and complete the information for the appropriate college/scholarship.
- Attend National College Fair held in Baton Rouge.
- Seek and apply for scholarships.

## November

- Submit requests for transcripts to meet deadlines **at least 20 school days** in advance.
  - Use the form found under student resources on the school website:  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/TranscriptRecordsRequest>
  - If the request is for the Common App or Coalition App, select “unofficial transcript” and have it sent to Kristy Gremillion at [kgremillion@lsu.edu](mailto:kgremillion@lsu.edu). It will then be uploaded to the application for you.
  - If the request is NOT for Common App or Coalition App, select “official transcript” and complete the information for the appropriate college/scholarship.
- Complete regular decision applications during Thanksgiving Break.
- Seek and apply for scholarships.

## December

- Submit requests for transcripts to meet deadlines **at least 20 school days** in advance.
  - Use the form found under student resources on the school website:  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/TranscriptRecordsRequest>
  - If the request is for the Common App or Coalition App, select “unofficial transcript” and have it sent to Kristy Gremillion at [kgremillion@lsu.edu](mailto:kgremillion@lsu.edu). It will then be uploaded to the application for you.
  - If the request is NOT for Common App or Coalition App, select “official transcript” and complete the information for the appropriate college/scholarship.
- December ACT is often the last one that colleges will accept for admissions.
- Notify colleges and universities of any honors/awards received since the application was sent.
- Notify ULS through Cognito form as you receive college acceptances and scholarships:  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/CollegeScholarships>
- Seek and apply for scholarships.
- Notification of admission and financial aid awards start to arrive for early decision.

## January

- Submit mid-year report requests to counselor **at least 20 school days** in advance.

## March

- Notification of admission and financial aid awards start to arrive for regular decision.

## April

- Notification of admission and financial aid awards continue to arrive for regular decision.
- Attend Spring Testing at LSU for placement... dates TBA.
- Visit first choice college/ university if you have not already done so.
- Compare admission offers and make your final decision.

## May

- 1st – Official acceptance/ reply deadline: Acceptances must be confirmed with a deposit.
- Take AP/IB Exams.
- Write “thanks, but no thanks” letters to schools you will not attend. Silence is not a reply.
- Write thank you notes to all teachers and others who wrote recommendations for you. Let them know where you were accepted and where you plan to attend.
- Notify ULS through Cognito form as you receive college acceptances and scholarships even if you did not accept it/or go to that college):  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/UniversityLaboratorySchool1/CollegeScholarships>
- Study for final exams. Final grades are just as important!
- Return borrowed materials, sports equipment and library books... you don't want any liens on your transcript.

Graduation....Congratulations!

## COLLEGE PLANNING WEBSITES

### College Rankings

College Scorecard: <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

Princeton Review: <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings/best-colleges>

U.S. News Best Colleges: <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges>

### College Searches

Big Future: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

College Confidential: <https://www.collegeconfidential.com/schools/search>

College Insight: <http://college-insight.org/>

NACAC: <https://gotomyncf.com/Registration/EventSelectForState?stateName=All>

NextStepU: <https://www.nextstepu.com/>

Peterson's: <https://www.petersons.com/>

### College Application

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

### College Essays

Essays that Worked: <https://apply.jhu.edu/application-process/essays-that-worked/>

### Financial Aid

CSS Profile: <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>

FAFSA: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

FAFSA4Caster: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/spa/fafsa4c/#/landing>

Finaid: <http://www.finaid.org/>

Signal Vine: <https://www.osfa.la.gov/outreach/faces/jsf/signalvine/signalvineLFOSReg1.jsp>

### Scholarship Searches

Cappex: <https://www.cappex.com/>

Fast Web: <https://www.fastweb.com/>

Scholarships.com: <https://www.scholarships.com/>

Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS): [https://www.osfa.la.gov/tops\\_mainlink.html](https://www.osfa.la.gov/tops_mainlink.html)

Unigo: <https://www.unigo.com/>

### Other Helpful Websites

Louisiana Department of Education: <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/>

National Collegiate Athletic Association: <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes>

ULS Counseling Services: <https://ulscounseling.weebly.com/>

# Appendix

# Résumé Example

**JANE SMITH**

[jsmith@gmail.com](mailto:jsmith@gmail.com)

2222 Anywhere Rd, Baton Rouge, LA 70808 / Cell 225-867-5309

## OBJECTIVE

High school senior skilled in athletics and working with children in sports-related activities. Dependable and mature; seeking admission to a college where I may study Sports Medicine.

## EDUCATION

- **Anticipated HS Diploma:** May of 2022 from University Laboratory School
- **Grade Point Average:** 3.6 weighted G.P.A.; 3.45 unweighted G.P.A.
- **ACT Score:** 28 Composite, 25 English, 30 Math

## HONORS AND AWARDS

- Arion Award for Choir (2019)
- High School Honor Roll (2019 – present)
- Outstanding Student of the Year (2020)
- Superior Award in Health and Physical Education (2018)
- National Merit Semi-Finalist (2021)

## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Marching Band (2018 – present)
- Varsity Swim Team (2018-2020, Captain 2021)
- Key Club Member (2018 – present)
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes (2019 – present)

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Relay for Life - event organizer (2018-2020)
- Big Brother/Big Sister – coordinator of after school activities (2019)
- Baton Rouge Food Bank - organized food pantry (2019-2020)
- Boys and Club Girl of Baton Rouge – big sister (2018-present)

## EMPLOYMENT

- Lifeguard at Crawfish Aquatics (2018-2019)
- Soccer Referee, YMCA, Baton Rouge, LA (2019-2020)
- Cashier, Chic-Fil-A, Baton Rouge, LA (2020-present)

## TRAININGS & CERTIFICATIONS

- Red Cross CPR Certification
- Lifeguard Certification
- Certified Soccer Referee
- Safety Sitters Certification

## College Comparison Worksheet

This activity requires you to investigate various aspects of postsecondary institutions. Evaluate each school in the areas listed below and then compare your evaluations.

<b>Campus Environment</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Campus facilities, equipment and services			
Computers and internet access			
Food service (cafeterias)			
Health care			
Housing			
Library			
Recreational			
Transportation (parking, buses, etc.)			
Campus safety			
Campus setting (urban, suburban, small town, rural)			
Geographic location (distance from home)			
Religious affiliation			
<b>Student Body</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Number of undergraduates enrolled			
% of full-time students			
% of men and women			
% of students 25 or older			
% of minority students			
% of students from out-of-state			
% of international students			
% of student who live on campus			
% of students who return the following year			
% of students who graduate			
% of graduates employed within one year			
<b>Cost</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Application fee			
Fee waiver available?			
Amount of deposit (after acceptance)			
Total annual cost of attendance			
Tuition and fees			
Room and board			
Other required expenses (books, supplies)			



<b>Financial Aid</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Financial aid availability			
Grants (participates in federal and/or state grant program?)			
Scholarships			
Work study			
Loans			
Financial aid deadline			
Financial aid forms (FAFSA, PROFILE, school)			
% of undergraduates receiving financial aid			
Average amount awarded to undergraduates			
<b>Student Activities/Enrichment</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Athletic offerings (sports: collegiate and intramural)			
Fraternalities, sororities, social and academic clubs			
Extracurricular organizations and events			
Music, fine arts, performing arts			
Internships, community service, study abroad			
<b>Student Support Services</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Counseling, mentoring, or tutoring services			
Support for physical challenges & learning disabilities			
Student groups for women, students of color, LGBTQ students, Career, internship, employment assistance, job placement			
<b>Other Considerations</b>	<b>College #1</b>	<b>College #2</b>	<b>College #3</b>
Financial condition			
School accreditation			



## Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

In order to write a quality letter, please submit a **minimum of 15 school days** in advance of the due date. Please complete all questions and be as detailed as possible. The more information you provide, the more information we will be able to share.

State what you are planning to study in college and why?

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Do you have any experience in this field? If so, please describe

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What are your favorite subjects and why?

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How would a teacher describe you as a student in their classroom? (Give examples)

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Which six adjectives best describe you (circle):

Hard working	Sensitive	Determined	Shy	Organized
Philosophical	Competitive	Perfectionist	Artistic	Independent
Strong willed	Creative	Assertive	Modest	Leader
Generous	Goal Oriented	Compassionate	Helpful	Easy going

Friendly                      Tolerant                      Optimistic                      Loyal                      Helpful  
Listens well                      Good speaker                      Fun loving                      Outgoing                      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How would some who knows you well describe you?

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What are your strengths and what are your limitations? Give an example of how you have shown your greatest strength and how you have overcome your limitation(s).

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Outside of academics, what do you enjoy or find the most challenging?

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Of what are you most proud?

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Where do you fit among your brothers/sisters (i.e. oldest, middle, youngest, only child)? If either of your parents graduated from college, which college did they attend, or are you the first generation to attend college? Where did/do any of your siblings attend college?

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What extracurricular activities are you involved in? (club, sport, community service etc.)

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Which extracurricular activity was the most significant to you and why was this experience so important to you?

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If you work, where do you currently work and how long have you been employed? What are your duties? What do you do with your income?

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Is financial aid a factor in your college decision? If so, please explain.

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If 45,000 students, who have similar attributes as yours, apply to the same college as you, why should an admissions counselor select you?

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Describe any unusual circumstances or challenges you have faced and discuss the ways you have responded to them. If this does not apply to you, describe a moment in your life that has made a significant difference toward your perspective on life.

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