

GETTING INTO COLLEGE:

Part One: Nine Tips to Help You Choose

1. Start with who you are and what you want: Some schools devote a large chunk of their resources to graduate programs and research. Some schools focus more attention to undergraduates and teaching and learning. Some schools are known for certain specialty programs and others promote a religious orientation. You can find schools that are keenly interested in recruiting minority students or low-income students or especially high achieving students. What is it that you want? The people who know you best can help you figure this one out.

2. Size Matters: Colleges come in many sizes, and they are located in towns of various sizes. You can have a small school in a large city, a large school in a fairly small town, a large school in a large city, or about any combination you want. The key questions are these: What are you comfortable with? Do you want to get out of your comfort zone? In the end, though, most schools will provide a quality education regardless of size.

3. Location, Location, Location: How far away from home do you want to be? In general, the farther away you are, the less often you will be able to get home. Also, being farther away might mean that transportation costs will be higher. Just as size matters, so does the style of campus. Schools in large cities can still feel secluded from the larger city and have a lot of green space and open areas, while others may have a distinctly urban feel, while yet others may be relatively secluded from malls and entertainment options. Some may have limited residential capabilities and may require you to commute. Again, what fits you?

4. Deal with Sticker Shock: Of course, price matters, but don't assume you can't afford college based on the "sticker price" of the school. If you investigate lots of options and ask for help, you can find affordable options and financial help. Keep in mind that often the investment in education pays off in the long run. Comparing sticker prices can be misleading, too. While smaller private schools often show a much higher sticker price, they sometimes have other funds to bring the total cost down to levels comparable to state-funded universities. It generally pays to talk to the schools you are interested in to get to a bottom-line price. Contact their financial aid offices.

5. What do you want to major in? You might hear this question often enough in your last years of high school to make you want to hide in your room. If you know what you want, simply make sure the college has the major you want and that you are comfortable with its reputation in that area. Find out what kind of success their graduates have. However, many high school students will change their minds after starting college, and many don't know what career they want to pursue. Don't let that stop you. Many times the college experience will help you define your path. If you don't know, you might

want to consider a school with plenty of options or even a two-year school that offers a less expensive way to sample different offerings.

6. Visit some schools: There is no good substitute for a campus visit. To do so, check the college web site or call the school for visitation guidelines. Set up an appointment to meet with an admissions counselor and a financial aid representative. Schedule a campus tour preferably in the fall when students are on campus. Summer visits can be convenient and useful, but the atmosphere changes when students are there.

7. Do some surfing: There's lots of good information on the Internet. Some good sites are listed below and the college websites are great, too.

8. The Truth can set you Free: The truth is this: For most students, there are lots of schools that would be a good fit. You can be free of the pressure of feeling like there is only one right place for you. Even if your choice doesn't work out perfectly, today transferring schools within the State of Ohio is easier than ever. Relax, do your homework, and make an informed choice. You don't have to fret.

9. There's excellent help close to home and it's FREE: The guidance counselors at Willard High School have lots of knowledge, experience, and resources to help you find your path. We have a college night every September and a financial aid night every January. When we don't have the answers, we know where to direct you to find them. Most of all, we really enjoy helping you out. See us early and often if you want.

For questions about the admissions process, financial aid, and other college related information, contact Tom Kagy at 419.935.0181 ext. 1032 kagy.tom@willardschools.org. or Dianne Steinmetz at ext. 1031 or steinmetz.dianne@willardschools.org

Helpful Internet Sites:

www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov

www.act.org

www.collegeboard.com

www.aicuo.edu

www.finaid.org

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>

<http://college-insight.org>

<http://www.unigo.com>

<http://www.ucan-network.org>

<http://www.collegeresults.org>

<http://www.cappex.com>

Part Two: Applying

When: In general, students who want to live on campus should apply before Thanksgiving. Late application can adversely affect securing admission, a dorm room, scholarships or other financial aid. Even listed deadlines are sometime too late to secure your most preferred situation.

How: There are two ways:

a. Over the Internet: Most colleges are strongly encouraging students to apply online. Some will even waive the application fee if you do so. Go to the college web site and follow the application instructions. Be sure to return a signed transcript release form to guidance. Colleges will not accept students until they have an opportunity to review your grades and other records. Notify guidance that you need an official transcript sent to every college you are applying to.

b. Paper applications: Follow these steps:

- 1) Pick up an application in guidance.
- 2) Return the completed application to guidance.
- 3) Include check to the college if there is an application fee.
- 4) Include an essay if required.
- 5) Sign a transcript release so that guidance can send your records.

NOTE: Students can apply without an ACT or SAT score, but they should take one of these tests soon. They should indicate on the registration form any colleges they want to receive to receive the scores. We recommend that college bound students take one of these test for the first time no later than June of their junior year. For more details on these tests, see Part Four below.

Part Three: Financing

We recommend that students and parents/guardians talk to the college financial aid officers at the colleges they are seriously considering. They are not only the financial aid experts, they know the details of the financial aid package as they relate to their specific school. In general, though, there are some basic concepts you need to know.

There are four basic types of aid:

- 1) Scholarships
- 2) Grants
- 3) Work Study
- 4) Loans

Scholarships and grants are free and never need to be repaid. Work study provides income for work rendered. Loans come in many forms, some more financially appealing than others, but they all need to be repaid.

Two good Internet sources for financial aid information:

www.fafsa.gov

www.finaid.org

Part Four: Testing to get into College:

Virtually all colleges require that students take one of the two established college entrance exams – the ACT or the SAT. Most schools accept either type of test score, but students should check in guidance to determine which schools specify a particular test. These tests are held in nearby towns on Saturday mornings. See guidance for SAT/ACT test dates. Registration materials for these tests are available in guidance, but both testing companies strongly encourage students to register online.

For the ACT, go to www.act.org

For the SAT, go to www.collegeboard.com

SPECIAL NOTE: Every October, Willard High School offers juniors the opportunity to take the PSAT as a preparation for either the ACT or the SAT. The test acquaints students the college entrance test format, provides comparative scores, helps students identify areas of strength and weakness, and is used as a key criteria in determining National Merit Scholars and other scholarships. We encourage college bound juniors to take this test.