



Atlantic Shores
Christian School

*“Leading students into higher levels of
excellence so that they can impact their world
for Christ.”*

College Handbook

The College Handbook

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Parents,

The period of time when students are considering options and making decisions about the future is filled with excitement and discovery. Like all of life's experiences, this is a time for parental support and involvement. Compressing college planning into one year can be overwhelming. Hopefully, this guide will help you spread the planning process over time.

Many books have been written on the subject of how to get into college, and at times it may seem like you are not doing enough. Along with providing information, the purpose of this handbook is to offer parents of the college bound student a brief synopsis of how to be involved and give students a way to organize the college planning process.

Parents can be active participants in the college exploration and application process. You should visit campuses with your child and participate in programs offered by admission offices. Other ways to be involved are: making certain your child has been thorough in his/her search; reviewing the admission and financial aid applications and offering guidance in their completion; making certain that tasks get completed and forms are submitted on time; being the support and counselor when decisions are made.

God has a plan for your children, and selecting a college is one of life's important decisions. That decision not only represents a significant financial investment, but the choice also influences so much of who your children become in all areas of life. I hope this information will help you in your preparations and decisions. If at any time you have questions or I may be of help, please call or come by for a visit.

Leslie Ribeiro
Director of Guidance

What Colleges Look For

AN OVERVIEW

Before beginning the college selection process, it is helpful to know what these institutions expect. There are many types of colleges, and each handles admissions differently. For example, some students will know where they are going to college in September of the senior year while others will wait in suspense until April 1. This process varies by college. There are, however, some generalities which may be counted on wherever the student applies.

1. It cannot be overemphasized how important grades are in the admission process.

The best indicator of future behavior is past behavior; therefore, colleges place great emphasis on secondary school performance. This is largely considered to be the best predictor of how well one will perform in college.

The grade point average (GPA) is calculated beginning in ninth grade and includes all courses. Atlantic Shores reports a weighted GPA, with Honors classes receiving .5 extra point and AP/DE courses receiving one extra quality point. Admission personnel will review the cumulative GPA for all courses in grades nine through eleven. Colleges usually ask for a list of senior year courses and also ask to review first semester grades of the senior year as well.

The most important factor in a college's admission decision will be the student's GPA.

2. Colleges place great emphasis on grades. They also pay close attention to the types of courses taken.

How much emphasis this particular factor plays in the admission decision varies by college. In general, the more selective the college's admission policies are, the more likely it is that the college will look for the difficulty of the courses taken. Generally, colleges prefer that students take a more challenging course than to an easier class for a guaranteed A.

The second most important factor in a college's admission decision will be the types of courses taken.

3. The SAT and ACT are important instruments for colleges.

A strong SAT or ACT score cannot compensate for a relatively low GPA or less strenuous course selection. Without knowing the student, colleges reviewing an application with a well-above average SAT or ACT score and a relatively low

GPA and/or weak course selection may assume that the student is lazy. Strong test scores reflect strong academic potential. If the student does not live up to that potential in the classroom, the college will pass judgment accordingly, especially selective colleges.

Test scores act as an equalizer of sorts between schools. Since each high school's academic program varies, making the GPA a somewhat arbitrary number, the SAT and ACT provide a nationally standardized benchmark. For this reason, test scores are an important factor in the college's admission decision.

SAT and ACT scores are an important piece of the admission decision, but not the most important piece.

SAT and ACT scores factor more heavily in the admission policies of selective schools. These colleges may deny admission to an outstanding candidate who has lower than average comparative test scores. Why? These colleges have applications from students who are outstanding candidates and have correspondingly strong test scores. When considering admission to highly selective colleges, a difference of 50 points on the SAT could impact the admission decision.

Less selective colleges evaluate the SAT and ACT scores differently and will not make a decision based on a 50-point spread. Instead, they look at the SAT and ACT scores for red flags. Their definition of a strong test score is lower than that of a highly selective college, and they are more forgiving of a low test score if other factors such as GPA or leadership potential are strong.

4. The admission application is reviewed as a complete package by the college.

The colleges consider not only what type of student will be in their classrooms, but also what type of roommate a person will make and how he can contribute to the campus community. This is why colleges look carefully at extracurricular activities, community service and leadership experience. Colleges consider what letters of recommendation tell them about academic potential, but they also look to the letters as an evaluation of character. Colleges review the essay for writing skills and to better understand personality and priorities. Each of these factors has weight in the admission decision.

Remember, however, a stellar extracurricular history cannot compensate for a poor GPA and SAT/ACT test score. While it is advisable to show strength in as many areas as possible, nothing can substitute for good grades in challenging courses.

Please keep in mind these are simply generalities. In the end, it is a subjective process that varies according to the academic year, the college and the student.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

PREPARATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL

The grades a student earns in eighth grade are not used in computing a student's grade point average (GPA), and they do not appear on a student's high school transcript unless they are designated high school credited courses such as Algebra I. The eighth grade is, nevertheless, an important year.

1. Eighth grade grades are used to determine placement in ninth grade courses.

There are specific areas that can be developed in middle school to provide a strong foundation for high school. Course selection is one of the most important factors in selective college admissions. Most middle school students do not realize that course selection begins in eighth grade. Teachers make ninth grade placement recommendations for students in the spring of eighth grade. Ninth grade honors enrollment is based on the grades and work ethic shown in eighth grade.

Please remember students may take honors and AP/DE courses throughout high school. A significant number do not begin taking these more challenging courses until eleventh or twelfth grade. So if your child does not take an honors class in ninth grade, it does not mean your child cannot enroll in these courses during the junior or senior year. This option will still be open.

2. Immediate rewards are the best way to motivate an eighth grade student.

This reward might be something as simple as praise or offering a special privilege. Because middle school students live in the here and now, their motivation needs to be in the here and now. Explaining how their work ethic could hurt their future plans typically is not an effective motivator.

Middle school students typically spend very little time thinking about their future plans. Your child may understand that eighth grade marks impact ninth grade course selection and that this course selection will impact their college choice. If he or she is typical, however, this may not correlate with work ethic.

Students who have developed good study skills in middle school are much better prepared for high school.

3. Help your son or daughter identify activities that he/she will enjoy in high school.

Students who are involved in activities seem to enjoy high school more and generally have greater academic success. All students do not have the desire or ability for leadership. Those who do should develop this ability as early as possible through student government, church youth groups and athletic teams.

We encourage serving others. Not only is it biblical, but our school feels it is a foundational character trait. Service is also highly valued by colleges and scholarship foundations. There are many different ways to serve. As a parent, encourage your child to try several types of service to discover which ones he/she enjoys the most.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING OUTSTANDING STUDENTS

- *Have high expectations – “Inspect What You Expect”
- *Stay involved
- *If you suspect learning problems, seek help early
- *Build your child’s self-esteem – Praise and Encourage
- *Help children develop verbal and math reasoning skills – ask “Why?”

NINTH GRADE

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

Freshmen courses, grades, and credits become a part of the student's transcript. Activities, awards, and honors become important for resumes and applications.

1. Monitor academic progress.

Parents should be sure to see all progress reports and report cards. Provide encouragement and support, making sure that your son or daughter understands freshman grades are important. Ninth graders will find more challenging, academic expectations in high school. It may be necessary to find new ways to study or learn additional test preparation skills. Students may need to experiment with several options to find the study technique that is right for them.

2. Encourage your son or daughter to become involved in a wide variety of activities.

In addition to asking students to list their high school activities, many college and scholarship applications ask for evidence of leadership. If your son or daughter has leadership potential, encourage him/her to develop his/her leadership skills by joining a club or a team, etc. Depth of involvement (e.g., four years in band, soccer, etc.) in any activity is also important because it shows focus and commitment.

Becoming involved in activities outside of school is also important. Any type of volunteer work or community service will also enhance the college or scholarship application. Start keeping a file with lists and information on school activities, honors, awards, leadership positions, employment, volunteer work, community service, etc. Include everything. This will be very helpful three years from now.

This year friends probably will become even more important. It is tempting to let social life take control. Help your ninth grader find the balance between social and academic activities. What is right for him/her may be different from the activities of his/her friends. The time management skills learned now will be critical to having an active social life and getting homework done. Some friends will spend more time on social life than academics. Others may tend to get lost in books at the expense of their social life. Each type of activity is important, so encourage your son or daughter to find a balance and success in both.

3. In the spring, review your son or daughter's four-year high school plan and make certain he/she selected the most appropriate courses for the sophomore year.

4. Help your son or daughter plan meaningful activities for the summer.

Your son or daughter could, for example, join an athletic team, take a course, perfect a skill, do volunteer work, get a job, etc.

FRESHMAN CHECKLIST

- I know the grading scale used at my high school.
- I know the grade point conversion system (which tells me how many grade points each letter grade is worth).
- I know how many credits I need to graduate.
- I understand that colleges will want me to do more than the minimum graduation requirements and will want me to challenge myself by enrolling and doing well in tough classes.
- I have tried to develop friendly relationships with my teachers.
- I understand that the colleges to which I apply will view the classes I took during the 9th grade, the grades I earned in those classes, the GPA I earned each semester, and my cumulative GPA.
- I know all of the activities that are offered and organizations that exist at my high school.
- I keep track of my grades in my classes so that I always know where I stand and if I need to work harder to improve my grades in order to reach my goals.
- I attempt every assignment, project, and test so that I don't earn any zeroes.

TENTH GRADE

A TIME FOR SELF-DISCOVERY

The sophomore year should be a year of personal growth. In addition to working hard in school and being involved in activities, sophomores should be identifying personal abilities and interests as well as looking for ways to further develop their talents and skills.

- 1. Continue to monitor academic progress.**
- 2. Take the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Qualifying Test).**

PSAT/NMSQT is a national test that is administered by high schools in October. Sophomores take the test in preparation for the SAT.

THE ROLE OF THE PSAT

The PSAT is administered in the fall of each school year. The PSAT is designed to predict SAT scores and familiarize students with SAT-formatted questions. The eleventh grade administration of the PSAT also allows students to enter the National Merit Scholarship Competition, one of the most prestigious scholarships available. PSAT scores are not reported to colleges and are primarily for practice.

Along with the Evidence Based Reading/Writing and Math scores, the PSAT provides college and career readiness benchmarks, list the correct answer key, student answers, and points out strengths and weaknesses on each section of the test. Students receive their actual test booklet when they receive their score report so they can use this information to review and learn from their mistakes. Students can send their scores to Khan Academy for free personalized practice recommendations.

The PSAT is perhaps one of the most valuable test preparation tools available to students.

- 3. Start to explore careers and discuss college options.**

Gather information, make informal visits to colleges and go to college fairs. Discuss your son or daughter's aptitudes, interests, and abilities with him/her, and begin to view these in terms of possible college majors and career options.

- 4. At the end of the year, update the "Activities and Awards" information.**

SOME TIPS FOR PARENTS ON HOW TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN APPROACH THE CAREER CHOICE

Model how to approach a major life decision. *Pray for and with your child. This is your chance to teach your child the importance of prayer and how to seek God's will in making life decisions. These lessons will help your children with other major decisions, including their choice of a spouse. Pray with them; show them what God's word teaches us about seeking His will and give them a strong foundation of decision-making skills through example.*

Remember that this is just the beginning. *Do not panic if your child announces a career plan that you believe to be a poor choice. This is just the start of the career selection process, and it is certainly not going to be the last "great plan" that you hear between now and adulthood. Keep it in perspective. Teenagers try on different identities before they find the one that suits them. Give them the freedom to experiment with the idea of different careers.*

Help your child research the facts. *The Occupational Handbook, available in bookstores or online, is an excellent source to learn about hundreds of occupations. Help your children think through a career that necessitates living in another part of the state or even another part of the country as well as those requiring graduate degrees.*

Remember who takes final ownership of this decision - it isn't you. *It is tough to keep your own dreams and plans separate from your child's career decision. If you always envisioned your daughter as a doctor, and she announces that she would rather be a graphic designer, remember that this is her decision. Express your opinion and state your case, but ultimately make it clear that the decision isn't yours. It is very important that the career choice makes your child happy, not you.*

Use your network of friends and colleagues to match your children with someone who works in their area of interest. *The career choice needs to be an educated decision, and this is best accomplished by talking with someone who has firsthand knowledge. If your son tells you he's thinking about becoming a pilot, try to make arrangements for him to speak with a family friend or acquaintance who is a pilot. This is the best way to truly learn about a career.*

ELEVENTH GRADE

STANDARDIZED TESTING and COLLEGE VISITS

The junior year is when students should seriously begin examining their post-secondary options, take college entrance tests, make college visits, and start searching for scholarships.

1. Continue to monitor academic progress.

Since college applications are completed in the fall of a student's senior year, the last, and most recent grades on the transcript are the junior year grades. If you are interested in attending a selective college, register for honors, AP/DE, and advanced courses.

2. Make certain your son or daughter takes the PSAT/NMSQT in October.

The PSAT is a national test administered at ASCS. There are several reasons for taking the PSAT/NMSQT:

- 1) It is excellent practice for the SAT, and it gives students an idea of how they will score on the SAT.
- 2) Students can see how their academic skills compare to those of college bound students across the nation.
- 3) Students whose scores are exceptionally high are recognized by the National Merit Foundation. This recognition can lead to scholarships.

When a student registers for the PSAT, he/she is given a Student Bulletin containing valuable test-taking tips along with a practice test. Encourage your son or daughter to read the Student Bulletin and to take the practice test; it can make a difference.

The results of the PSAT are available in January. Students receive a Reading/Writing score and a Math score, with each score ranging between 160 and 760.

Students can also set up their collegeboard accounts and access a detailed PSAT score report.

3. Talk about college options.

There are over 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States. As you begin looking at colleges, consider the following:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| *Location | *Available majors |
| *Size | *Reputation |
| *Cost | *Competitiveness |
| *Facilities | *Community |

Early in the selection process, determine what is important. Are you looking for a college close to home? Does your son or daughter want a large college or a small college? Should you consider both secular and Christian schools? After you have determined what you are looking for in a college, you can then begin to search for colleges that meet your criteria. The college guidance office can help in the search. There are excellent books available, and a wealth of information is available on the internet.

Collegeboard also offers MyBigFuture which helps you find your college fit, explore careers, and ways to help pay for college.

4. Be sure to register for the SAT and/or ACT early.

Almost all four-year colleges require scores for either the SAT or the ACT. Many colleges will accept scores from either test; however, some colleges require or prefer scores from one or the other. Students should check the college’s catalog or admission office for information regarding which test a college requires or prefers.

Students may retake these tests as many times as they want; colleges generally use the highest score. It is important for students to take these tests by the spring of their junior year so that they will have time to retake them if the scores are not as high as they need to be.

Students should register online at www.collegeboard.org or www.act.org.

5. Attend College Fairs.

A good way to speak with representatives from many colleges at once is to attend a college fair. The Chesapeake/Virginia Beach area hosts these college fairs in the fall in various locations. Local Christian schools host the National Christian College Fair in the fall as well. www.naccap.org

6. Make college visits.

A college visit is perhaps the most important thing you can do to find the right match. This point cannot be overemphasized. Students who take the time to visit several campuses and form their opinions of what they do and do not like will, tend to have more direction and focus throughout the application process. They are less likely to procrastinate in completing their applications and, generally, experience less stress in making their final choice than students who do not visit.

The majority of college visits should occur during eleventh grade. Students in tenth grade are often too far removed from their college choice to invest fully in the visit, and students in twelfth grade are too busy with activities and the paperwork of applying to find time for visits. Parents should take advantage of every teacher workday or school holiday in eleventh grade to squeeze in visits to various colleges. This will help you to find the right collegiate fit.

To plan a visit, call the admissions office several weeks ahead of time. Ask if they have any “visitation days,” “preview days,” or “open houses” for perspective students. If you want to visit a college on a day when no specific program is planned, you can usually schedule individual appointments through the admissions office.

7. Carefully select courses for the senior year.

Be certain senior courses meet all requirements for graduation and for the college(s) your son or daughter may attend. Meet with the academic dean or college counselor to review your course load and make sure you are satisfying high school graduation and college entrance requirements for the post secondary schools of interest. Just because you are satisfying the requirements to graduate from high school doesn't mean you meet the requirements to attend the college of your choice. Colleges want to see that seniors are continuing to follow a strong, college preparatory program. They generally request a list of the senior courses be included with the application and/or transcript.

8. Complete an activities resume.

As an eleventh grade student, the last task you need to complete is an activities resume. This resume will be sent with the other contents of your applications when requested. Completing the resume your junior year will be very helpful.

A sample resume follows. Note, Peggy Sue Smith is not a real person. Peggy's diverse array of activities, however, should demonstrate how to list any kind of activity on the resume.

WRITING AN ACTIVITIES RESUME

1. **Be specific.** Indicate how many years you have participated in each activity. Also, put yourself in the reader's place. Will that person know that *Accolade* is the yearbook? Clarify if there is any doubt.
2. **Include activities that you intend to participate in during twelfth grade.** If you have participated in an activity for a few years, and you know that you will participate as a senior, include that in your activities resume.
3. **Use a standard font.** While you certainly want your resume to stand out, do not use your font to show creativity. If a college scans applications into their computer system, which many do, more elaborate fonts do not always scan well.
4. **Don't limit yourself to Atlantic Shores Christian School activities.** It is highly recommended that you include activities outside of Atlantic Shores. This may include volunteer work as well as part-time jobs.
5. **Nothing is too small to include on your resume.** This is your opportunity to sell yourself. Include anything that demonstrates the kind of person you are. It may feel a bit awkward to brag, but that is the purpose of the resume.
6. **Try to limit the resume to one page.** While this will not be an issue for everyone, some of you have been involved in so many activities that your resume will spill over to another page. If you need to shorten your resume, eliminate some descriptions when possible or reduce the size of your font where appropriate.
7. **If your resume seems too short...**add a section at the end entitled "Hobbies and Interests." This can include activities that you enjoy doing in your spare time. It gives the colleges a better picture of the type of person you are and also fills up space.

Peggy Sue Smith

1923 River Road

Virginia Beach, VA 12345

Email PSS@aol.com

Leadership Experience

- Class Treasurer – grade 10
- Student Government Representative, grade 11
- First Presbyterian Church Youth Group Leader, grades 9-11
- Jr/Sr Prom Committee, grade 11
- Chesapeake Student Leadership Forum, grade 10

Extracurricular Activities

- The Element Editor (school yearbook), grade 12
- High School Band, grades 9-12
- Cast Member, *The Glass Menagerie*, grade 11
- National Honor Society
- Mu Alpha Theta Math Society

Athletic Participation

- Soccer: JV grades 9-10, Varsity grades 11-12
- Basketball: JV grade 10, Varsity grade 11

Awards and Honors

- Highest GPA award in math, grade 9
- National Honor Society, grades 10-12
- Who's Who Among American High School Students grades 9, 11

Volunteer Activities

- First Presbyterian Church Vacation Bible School, summers 2001 and 2002
Assistant for first grade class, 20 hours per summer
- Mission trip to Costa Rica, summer 2002 (1 week)
- Habitat for Humanity workday, grade 10, 11

Employment

- Applebee's Restaurant, June 2001-December 2001
Hostess, Waitress

SAT COMPARED TO ACT

While the predominant test on the East Coast is the SAT, the majority of colleges recognize both the SAT and ACT. Approximately a third of students will score higher on the SAT, another third higher on the ACT, and the remainder will score equally on each. Colleges look at the highest score available to them in their review of a student. If more than one score is submitted, the lower score will not be considered. Colleges seek to give you an advantage in test score review. They even combine your best SAT critical reading and math scores, regardless of whether they were earned on different test dates, to give you the highest possible score.

The ACT is an achievement test that measures the knowledge you have gained throughout high school. It contains four sections: English, math, reading and science. The optional writing test measures skills in planning and writing a short essay. Some students naturally respond better to the nature of the questions on the ACT and an achievement test in general.

The SAT assesses student reasoning based on knowledge and skills developed by the student in school course work. The test includes a Reading Test, Writing and Language Test, and a Math Test. The essay is optional.

WHEN TO TEST

The SAT and ACT each are offered several times throughout the school year. When taking a prep course of any kind, it is best to take the test as soon as possible after finishing the course. This may be in the fall or the spring. The content of regular classes will help in preparation. One strategy would be to take the PSAT in October of the junior year and the SAT or ACT in the spring. The SAT/ACT may then be taken again in the fall of the senior year.

THE COLLEGE BOUND ATHLETE

Many students hoping to earn an athletic scholarship mistakenly believe that their junior year does not need to consist of the same activities as other students. They decide not to visit colleges because they want to wait and see who will offer them scholarships. While this might end up working out for some students, it is not what we advise.

If you are an athlete, please keep in mind that recruiting calendars and admissions calendars do not always align. Some students do not get recruited until the second half of their senior year, after their classmates have finished submitting applications and college admission offices have begun closing their incoming classes. These students find themselves nervously waiting, hoping that someone will make them a scholarship offer while watching their friends receive admission offers and make housing deposits at their college choices. Keep in mind the difficulty of scheduling campus visits while playing a sport. Practice and game schedules keep you very busy and leave little time for a day trip (or longer) to see a college campus.

It is advisable to apply to at least one or two colleges as a back-up plan in case an athletic scholarship does not materialize. The college should be one that you feel is a good match academically and financially, regardless of whether you play a sport.

Anyone playing an intercollegiate sport at the NCAA Division I or II level must be academically eligible to play as determined by the NCAA Clearinghouse. Students should submit paperwork to be declared eligible once they have completed their junior year. This may be done at www.ncaaeligibilitycenter.org

Online Registration Instructions:

1. Click on “College Bound Athletes”
2. Complete registration information and submit.

To Be Certified By the Clearinghouse:

1. The completed Student Release Form and fee must be received at the Clearinghouse by the spring of the senior year.
2. An official transcript must be mailed directly from every high school attended.
3. SAT or ACT scores must be sent directly from the College Board.
4. Final transcript must be sent. If all of the above steps are completed, the college guidance office will send this automatically.

MILITARY SERVICE ACADEMIES*

If you are interested in one of the military service academies, you should contact the academy NO LATER THAN JANUARY OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR.

- 1) Contact the academy to complete the Pre-Candidate information form.
- 2) Request a nomination to a military academy from your United States Congressman and Senators. Contact the US Senators for your state at www.senate.gov. To contact your Congressman, use the website www.house.gov. Many Congressmen have their academy applications online.

The Process for Military Academies:

An appointment to a United States Military Academy – West Point, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, or Merchant Marines is only for those who have a strong desire to serve their country. The application process is tedious and life as a cadet is rigorous, but the educational opportunity is excellent. Make contact with the academy no later than your junior year. The academy will assign a Liaison Officer. This person will be a great resource.

Sophomore and Junior Year

1. Contact the academy, and ask them to put you in contact with your Liaison Officer.
2. Make sure your guidance counselor and parents know about your interest.

Junior Year

1. Make sure you take and perform well on the PSAT.
2. Ask your Liaison Officer to help you apply for the special summer program at the academy. Admission to the summer program is by invitation ONLY and is based on PSAT.
3. Apply for a nomination through your Congressman and Senators.
4. Take the SAT and/or ACT.

Summer Before the Senior Year

1. Take medical and physical aptitude tests as directed by the academy.
2. Complete the academy application.
3. Complete the applications to the Congressman and Senators.

Contact Information

Air Force = www.usafa.edu 1-800-423-8723
West Point = www.usma.edu 1-800-872-2769
Navy = www.usna.edu 1-800-872-6289
Coast Guard = www.uscg.edu 1-877-NOW-USCG
Merchant Marines = www.usmma.edu 1-866-546-4778

ROTC

The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is an option for students interested in serving in the military. ROTC offers a wonderful way to have your education paid for with guaranteed occupations waiting for you after graduation. Seventy-five percent of all military officers come through the ROTC program. There are four-year and three-year scholarships with obligation to serve after graduation. Students should apply early (summer before senior year).

ROTC students may attend any college that accepts ROTC scholarships. Students may even attend one college for class and take their ROTC classes at a different nearby college. For information on ROTC scholarships, contact the following:

ROTC (Army)
1-800-USA-ROTC
www.armyrotc.com

AFROTC (Air Force)
1-800-522-0033
www.afrotc.com

NROTC (Navy)
1-800-522-0033
www.nrotc.com

PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTISTS*

Much like the athletes, performing and visual artists will need to communicate with the departments at their respective colleges. You should have a specific resume or portfolio to showcase your talent. As a performing artist you will in all likelihood need to audition or present a portfolio.

Begin communicating with colleges no later than your junior year to learn their schedules and timetables for audition and portfolio requirements.

Videos and Portfolios

Take the time to fully develop any supporting documents you provide to colleges. It should be an example of your very best work. Creating an audition tape or portfolio should take weeks not something put together overnight. You will need to be familiar with online platforms like SlideRoom where you may be asked to submit digital files during the application process.

*Information taken from [Accepted! A College Planning Workbook](#). Janet Miranda.

VISITING COLLEGES

There is no better way of getting the “feel” of college than by a campus visit. It takes visits to only three or four colleges to realize that each institution has its own distinctive atmosphere. Many students find that visiting colleges with family or friends gives them a different perspective and sharpens their own ideas about what they have seen and heard. What do you, the parent, do during a visit? In his book Handbook for College Admissions, Thomas Hayden, Vice President of Oberlin College, suggests the following:

Don’t make the arrangements yourself. *Let your child make the arrangements for the visit, setting up an appointment for the tour and the interview and procuring printed information about the college before making the visit.*

Time it right. *Try to plan your visit to the campus when the college is in session. Campus visits should not be planned during a college’s vacation or special event, such as a winter carnival or homecoming. At such times the campus is likely to look like a ghost town or a big party, and it will not give an accurate picture of day-to-day college life.*

Stroll around campus on your own. *Plan to conduct your own exploration of the college while your child is visiting. During the interview you can take the campus tour run by the admissions office, or you can visit the facilities that are of special interest to you. Visiting colleges when they are in session will enable you to talk to students in a frank and casual way. Sometimes this is easier done when your own son or daughter is not present. Students can be asked all manner of questions ranging from the quality of the food to whether or not they would send a son or daughter to this college, and why.*

Sit in on a class or two. *Attend a class and try to pick a subject you know something about so that you can judge the sophistication and clarity of what is being communicated to the students.*

Read campus bulletin boards. *The messages found here can tell you what is going on and what the issues are, and they also give you some idea of the vibrancy of the place. If you don’t find a bulletin board in your campus rambling, check the entrance to the student union or the bookstore. Still no luck? Ask a student.*

Eat in the cafeteria. *Having a meal on campus is also a good idea, but not just to sample the food. Use it as an opportunity to observe how students interact and how the faculty and students relate to one another. For instance, be conscious of segregation or cliques in which the members of one particular group eat together and seem to exclude others.*

Visit a dormitory. *In the course of your tour of the college, you should, by all means, see where students live. If the admissions tour does not include a dormitory room, you should ask to see one. The physical condition of dormitories, the environment as defined by lighting, color, and noise, and the security arrangements will be very important for the*

next four years. You will also want to ask about the various living options for students, such as theme houses, co-ops, and off-campus living.

Find out about support systems. *Where do students go if they have a problem? Assume that a student has difficulty comprehending the subject matter of an introductory chemistry course. To whom does he turn? Say there is a perennial problem with loud noise and partying in the dormitory - how does your daughter seek assistance in resolving that? Is there a network of adults and older students who can help freshmen through the adjustment of leaving home and living on their own? How does the advising system work, academically and socially? Can someone describe the interface between the advising system and the counseling system?*

Get a feeling for the campus environment. *How does this college or university operate as a community? Is there an atmosphere of mutual respect between students and faculty and particularly among the students themselves? What happens when there are conflicts among students? How do those get resolved? Is there any evidence of intolerance or political correctness on the campus?*

What's the school's mission? *How does it see itself serving its students and preparing them for the challenges of the twenty-first century? Perhaps this is not a question you ask anyone directly, but it is one you want to be able to answer nonetheless.*

Stay in the background. *You may be one of the parents who wonder whether you should seek a word with your child's interviewer at the conclusion of the interview. The best advice is to stay in the background. If for any reason the interviewer wants to speak to you-many schools have a protocol calling for this-you will be informed. The conversation will probably be informal, with your child in attendance. If you have specific questions about the curriculum or support mechanisms, now is the time to ask them.*

TWELFTH GRADE

THE FINAL DECISION

The senior year is when everything comes together. It is also the year in which you see the rewards of your hard work and planning. Regardless of your goals or college dreams, God will be present in many ways as you go through this decision-making process. Watch God work and expect spiritual growth as you go through the year.

1. Continue to monitor academic progress.

Seniors may have heard that senior grades are not important. They should know that many colleges request a seventh semester or mid-year transcript. At the end of the year, high schools also forward a final transcript (which includes all senior grades) to the college each student plans to attend.

2. Help your son or daughter set up a calendar for the year.

Use this calendar to record test dates, application deadlines, college visitation days, etc.

3. Have your son or daughter sign up for the fall SAT or ACT.

Most colleges will super score, meaning they will take the highest ACT/SAT math score from one ACT/SAT and combine it with the highest reading score from another ACT/SAT. For this reason, it is usually normal, and in many cases beneficial, for students to take the test more than once.

If your son or daughter does not score well on the SAT and /or ACT, this does not mean that he/she will not be accepted into the college of his/her choice or that your son or daughter will not be successful in college. Admission officers look at a variety of criteria when evaluating applicants, and there are many students who do not do well on these tests, but are, nevertheless, successful in college.

4. Obtain and complete college applications in the fall.

Prepare your applications early to meet admission deadlines. Many colleges require admission applications to be submitted prior to November 1 if you desire to be considered for any merit (non-need) scholarships. Some colleges have earlier deadlines, so check with each college of interest for deadlines. More and more colleges are making it possible for students to apply electronically or to download an application. Some colleges even require the application to be submitted electronically.

See that the application and/or supplementary forms are given to the Director of College Guidance and Placement at least two weeks before the deadline. Understand that it takes time and thought to proofread essays and to write recommendations. Remember, school is closed the last part of December. Applications with January deadlines should, therefore, be turned in the first week of December.

5. Apply for financial aid and scholarships.

Information on Financial Aid

There are basically three categories of financial aid:

- 1) Grants - money that is given to the student, usually because of financial need
- 2) Scholarships - money that is awarded because of exceptional academic achievement, an outstanding talent or skill, and/or financial need
- 3) Loans - borrowed money that must be repaid

Follow these steps to apply for financial aid:

- 1) Some colleges have their own financial aid application form. This form is usually included in the application packet.
- 2) Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) as soon after October 1 as possible. The FAFSA is a federal form that asks for information on income and assets. Approximately 4-6 weeks after you have mailed in the FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). (For a quicker response, the FAFSA can be completed online at www.fafsa.gov). A copy of the SAR is also sent to the colleges you designated. The SAR will inform you of your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC). Your EFC is the amount determined that you can afford to pay for your son's/daughter's education the following year. If the cost of the college is more than your EFC, you have a financial need and should be eligible for financial aid. This aid, however, may come in the form of low interest loans.
- 3) In addition to the FAFSA, some colleges and scholarship programs also require submission of the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE. The PROFILE is not an application but a supplemental need analysis document that is used to determine eligibility for private funds and institutional aid. These forms are available online at collegeboard.org.
- 4) Students and parents often find they do not get as much money through grants and scholarships as they need. If you find yourself in this situation, you may want to consider taking out a loan. Lending institutions provide Stafford Loans to students and PLUS loans to parents. Repayment of a Stafford Loan begins after the student is out of school. The Subsidized Stafford Loan, for students who have shown a financial need based on a

federal formula, is a loan in which the government pays the interest. (The FAFSA must be filed to determine qualification for these loans).

Note: To be eligible for federal financial aid, eighteen-year old males must be registered with the selective service.

Applying for Scholarships

You have probably heard people say that there are “millions of scholarship dollars that go unclaimed each year.” You have probably also talked to parents who have told you that their son or daughter was an outstanding student and could not get a scholarship.

The fact is, there are thousands of scholarships; however, most of these have very specific eligibility criteria.

When it comes to academic scholarships, students generally must have an outstanding GPA, high-test scores, excellent recommendations, and be involved in extracurricular and/or community service. To receive an athletic or talent scholarship, a student must truly be outstanding.

When looking for scholarships, keep the following in mind:

- 1) Start early. Begin looking into possibilities during the junior year. Be ready to locate and complete applications early in the senior year. Establish a free scholarship search account by visiting www.fastweb.com, considered to be one of the best scholarship search sites currently available.
- 2) The larger scholarships are usually awarded by the individual colleges.
- 3) Private colleges are often more generous in awarding scholarships, thus making private colleges competitive in price with public colleges.
- 4) Apply for local scholarships. These are generally for smaller amounts; however, the competition is not as great.
- 5) Be aware of deadlines.
- 6) Search internet sites and check with the college placement office.
- 7) Check to see if the financial aid and scholarship awards are renewable.
- 8) Keep a hard copy of every admission and scholarship application submitted for your records. Print off e-mail confirmations if applying online. If you receive an interview or are named a finalist for a scholarship, it is wise to familiarize yourself with the information you submitted prior to interviews.

- 9) Scholarship searches that charge a fee are very seldom worth the money, and some are scams. For more information regarding scholarship scams, contact the Federal Trade Commission at 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357) or visit them at www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams

Virginia's Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG)

Established in 1972, the Tuition Assistance Grant Program (VTAG) is designed to assist Virginia residents who attend accredited private, non-profit colleges and universities in Virginia for other than religious training or theological education. The VTAG is authorized in Chapter 4.1 Section 23-38.11 through 18 of the *Code of Virginia* as the Tuition Assistance Grant Act.

Applications may be acquired from the financial aid office of the private institution the student plans to attend. Completed applications must be submitted to the financial aid office of the institution on, or before, July 31 prior to the fall semester of enrollment. Applications submitted after July 31, but no later than December 1, will be considered for an award only if funds are available.

The basic criteria are:

1. Be a Virginia domiciled resident as defined by the Domicile Guidelines and the *Code of Virginia* §23-7.4;
2. Be enrolled full-time as an undergraduate, graduate, or professional student; and
3. Be enrolled at an eligible institution pursuing an eligible degree that is not in religious training or theological education.

The award amount is based on the number of eligible students and the amount of funds appropriated by the General Assembly. Maximum 2016-17 Annual Award:
Undergraduate= \$3,200 Graduate= \$1,600.

Awards are automatically renewed provided that the student continues to meet eligibility requirements and has not exceeded the maximum number of years of eligibility.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

You may get applications from a number of sources; the college guidance office, the college itself, or the college's website as a downloadable document.

Paper Applications

Complete your applications in black ink with neat penmanship. Once you have completed the application, take it to the college guidance office with a copy of your activities resume, the essay (if required), and the application fee. Your transcript will be added along with a copy of the school profile. You do not need to bring an envelope or provide postage for the application. The school provides both of these items.

Electronic Applications

Colleges are increasingly making their applications available on the Internet. Some colleges even prefer this type of application. If you wish to submit an application electronically, go ahead. Please remember, your electronic application cannot be reviewed without a transcript, so you must ask the college guidance office to mail the transcript. Some colleges also have a secondary school report which must be completed by a school official. These should be printed and given to the director of college placement to mail with the transcript. Failure to inform the college guidance director will lead to delayed admission decisions.

Please be mindful of deadlines when you submit your applications.
Procrastinators, take notice!

Letters of Recommendation

Some of you can get a letter or recommendation from an adult who holds a prominent position in the community or even from a member of the college community to which you are applying. A note of caution on these types of letters - colleges only want letters from adults who know you well. They will not be impressed by a letter from an adult who only knows your parents but does not know you.

When you ask a teacher for a recommendation, you should be specific as to what college or scholarship program will be receiving the recommendation. Teachers should give their letters to the college guidance office to be submitted with the application. You should not receive a copy of the letter or expect to read its contents. Some teachers, however, may give you a copy as a courtesy. Colleges prefer that letters remain confidential because it increases the honesty of the letters. If a teacher is asked to write a letter and feels he/she cannot be positive, the teacher will tell you so that you can make another selection.

Writing the Essay

While the essay is a common component of many college applications, it is not a requirement of all colleges. The primary goal of the essay is to help the college admission counselor know you better. It should be written in a personal, casual tone and not the formal tone that students use to write most essays for class assignments. The essay should read like a letter to a friend or even a journal entry. This is not the time to demonstrate your stunning vocabulary. The essay is the time to reveal your personality and what makes you unique.

Some colleges will provide guidelines in the number of words in the essay. Very often the topic is assigned, and in some cases it is left up to the applicant. You should type your essay unless directed otherwise, and include a heading with your full name.

Allow time for editing and proofreading. The Director of College Placement and Guidance and English teachers are available to help you with your essays. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this assistance. Expect to write several drafts and allow time for proofreading. This process requires planning in advance of the deadline.

TYPES OF ADMISSION

Standard Admission:

The application and supporting documents must be submitted by a set date in the senior year. The dates vary from October through March. The college then takes action on all applications and notifies all students of its decision at the same time. Notification dates for the majority of the schools fall on or around April 15.

Early Admission:

This program is for students who select a particular college as a definite first choice. The application must be submitted usually in October or November. The college will notify you, usually in December, whether you have been accepted or deferred to the standard admission review period. If accepted, you are under agreement to attend that institution and must withdraw all other applications.

Early Action:

This program is similar to Early Admission, but you do not have to commit yourself until the reply date in May and can continue to apply to other schools. Also, the college can refuse admission as well as defer or accept.

Rolling Admissions:

Many state universities and some private schools that use this program act on your application as soon as the file is complete. They notify you of the admission decision within weeks of receiving the complete application.

HELPFUL INTERNET SITES

College Resources	
ACT	www.act.org
American Universities by State	www.utexas.edu/world/univ/state
Careers	www.careers.org
Christian College Guide	www.christiancollegeguide.net
College Net	www.collegenet.com
College Rankings	www.usnews.com/sections/education
College View	www.collegeview.com
Colleges that Changes Lives	www.ctcl.org
Common Application	www.commonapp.org
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities	www.cccu.org
FAFSA	www.fafsa.ed.gov
Fast Web	www.fastweb.com
Fin Aid	www.finaid.org/finaid
NCAA Clearinghouse	www.naaclearinghouse.net
SAT	www.collegeboard.com
Schoolsoup	www.schoolsoup.com
Study Aids	
Educational Testing Service	www.ets.org
Homework Helper	www.bjpinchbeck.com
Kaplan Online	www.kaplan.com
Khan Academy	www.khanacademy.org
Princeton Review	www.princetonreview.com
Purdue Writing Lab	http://owl.english.purdue.edu
Study Skills Self-Help	www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html
Vocabulary Assistance	www.vocabulary.com