

# COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

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*Concord Christian Academy*



*Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders Today*

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# INFORMATION SHEET

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CCA High School CEEB Code: 080162

Mailing Address: Concord Christian Academy  
2510 Marsh Road  
Wilmington, DE 19810

College Counselor: Miss Jill Tillinghast  
Director of College Counseling  
[jill.tillinghast@concordchristian.com](mailto:jill.tillinghast@concordchristian.com)  
302.475.3247  
302.475.6462 (fax)

College Counseling Website: <http://concordchristian.com/k2-categories/college-counseling>

## **Tips for Organization throughout your Senior Year:**

1. Organize all paperwork and material related to the college search both electronically AND physically. Use the College Worksheet to keep up with dates and deadlines.
2. Spend time with your lists, spreadsheets, and documents each week and update your “to-do” lists in a timely manner.
3. Keep all application materials, including essays and extracurricular activity lists, backed up. Save them on your computer and online on a cloud like DropBox. Colleges occasionally lose materials, and you should always be ready to re-submit information if necessary.
4. Keep all publicity material for colleges on your list.
5. Use Miss Tillinghast as a resource! One big advantage of attending a small school is easy access your college counselor. You don't have to do this alone

# College Worksheet:

School Name	Application Deadline	Early Decision, Early Action, or Regular Decision?	Scholarship Deadlines?	Application Fee	Common App?	If yes, is there a school-specific supplement?	Which tests are required? (SAT, ACT, SAT II, none)	How many references are <b>required</b> and from whom?	Have you visited? If not, when do you plan to visit?

Which teachers have you asked to write your recommendations?

# RESPONSIBILITIES

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The responsibilities of the **STUDENT** are to:

- Spend time researching a number of different colleges and universities. Use your resources! Learn about schools outside of Delaware, in addition to a range of schools in Delaware. Make connections with colleges, visit campus when possible, and schedule your own interviews and overnight visits.
- Be aware of which college is God's will for your life. Pray about continuing your education in a Christian college.
- Keep Miss T updated about related thoughts and feelings, as well as actions taken in your college search.
- Apply to at least three colleges, if not more.
- Turn in all forms in a timely manner, request transcripts and recommendations in writing, and abide by all of the procedures laid out in the handbook.
- Request all Standardized Test Scores be sent directly to the colleges of your choice.
- Pay each college application fee (or request a fee waiver where applicable).
- Notify Miss T in writing if you need anything additional sent on your behalf (other than transcripts, the School Report, and Teacher Recommendations). This should include any additional information required by outside Scholarship Organizations.
- If applicable, register with the NCAA and NAIA to participate in collegiate athletics.
- Verify with each Admissions Office that all of your materials have been received and, if not, communicate with Miss Tillinghast about your needs.
- Apply for Financial Aid and Scholarships, and abide by each college's decision deadline.
- Inform Miss T of ALL admission decisions and of any scholarship money or financial aid awarded.

The responsibilities are the **PARENTS** are to:

- Participate fully in your son/daughter's college search process, including coming to the appropriate Parent Night and submitting your Parent Assessment Form on behalf of your Senior.
- Be supportive of your student throughout the process, and encourage them to branch out beyond schools that they have heard of.
- Be objective in the process.
- Be honest with your student about your financial situation.
- Submit all Financial Aid information accurately and in a timely manner.

- Make appointments with Miss Tillinghast as needed or desired.
- Allow your student to be the driver in the search process. Do not communicate with colleges on their behalf. Keep your communication with colleges to a minimum.
- Let the student be responsible for his/her own application process, including filling out applications, requesting interviews and campus visits, asking for recommendations, registering for Standardized Tests, and writing their essays.

The responsibilities of the **COLLEGE COUNSELOR** are to:

- Meet with the juniors and seniors to think strategically about the college search and application process, and with underclassmen as requested.
- Help each CCA student find his or her “**best fit**” college or university.
- Organize visits to colleges that students are already interested in, as well as to schools that will expand and grow students’ perspectives on the college search process.
- Conduct an interview with each junior at the end of the year to continue to get to know them, to get an update on the process, and to relay important information regarding how to maximize the summer before the Senior year.
- Provide Seniors with an Essay Writing Workshop.
- Provide parents with information that will be helpful through the college search process.
- Meet with families and students throughout the year as requested, and answer any questions or concerns that may arise over the course of four years at CCA.
- Provide up-to-date, current information to parents and students and give advice and guidance to both.
- Write the counselor letter of recommendation and complete the secondary school report (SSR), and oversee the mailing of teacher letters of recommendation, counselor letter, official transcript and the secondary school report to all colleges to which a student has applied.
- Advocate for the student in the Admissions process.

# POLICIES

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*All policies are effective August 1, 2015.* The following policies have been put into place to provide CCA students with every possible advantage in the college application process. Failure to abide by these policies may have an adverse effect on the student's admission status.

1. All Concord Christian Academy students are required to complete an interview with the Miss Tillinghast or administrative personnel at the end of their junior year. This requirement will be waived for students who start at CCA in their senior year. All seniors are required to fill out the Senior Assessment Form and submit it to Miss T by October 1. Parents are *highly encouraged* to fill out the Parent Assessment Form by October 1.
2. Seniors are required to submit a Transcript Request for *every* college or scholarship program to which they would like a transcript sent on their behalf. Students must submit their Transcript Request at least 3 weeks prior to the college's transcript deadline.
3. All CCA juniors will have the opportunity to visit colleges or universities through the PURSUE component of the Concord Experience. We also allow juniors and seniors four days each (four total days over two years) to visit colleges during the school year. It is the responsibility of the family to visit colleges on their own time, both to explore options and to narrow down the search.
5. Seniors are **highly encouraged** to set up an individual meeting with Miss Tillinghast to discuss application strategies, deadlines, and to review applications. It is the student's responsibility to know the application and financial aid deadlines for each of the schools they are applying.
6. If required by a college or university, we will report the decile ranking for each student. Rank will also be reported when required for state scholarships. Exact class rank will never be released to parents, students, or college admission offices until after graduation from Concord Christian Academy.

# STANDARDIZED TESTING

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The SAT and the ACT are offered multiple times a year. **Generally, these tests are required for College Admission.** These are two very different tests that test different learning styles. It is our recommendation that each student takes *each test once before taking either test twice*. Resources to help you prepare for these tests can be found on the College Counseling section of the CCA website.

Please sign up for the test early. Some testing centers have a limited number of seats. We do not administer the SAT or the ACT at CC, so students will have to travel to other area high schools to take the exam. Seniors, if you are planning on retaking the SAT, you need to be sure to register for one of the first two dates available (ideally the first). The tests dates can be found by following the link on the CCA website.

To register, please visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and create a username and password. There is a fee associated with registration. Store your username and password in a safe place, and keep your receipt as proof of payment. Additionally, when taking the SAT, you have the option to send scores to specific schools. You get to choose whether or not to send all of your scores or just the scores from a particular test date. Take advantage of this opportunity to submit your scores for free! You will have to pay an additional fee to send your scores later.

Some colleges require or strongly encourage **SAT Subject Tests**. Please thoroughly review the admission requirements for the schools to which you are applying to determine whether or not you should take a Subject Test (or multiple). Visit the College Board website to determine when each test is being administered.

To register, please visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) and create a username and password. There is a fee associated with registration. Store your username and password in a safe place, and keep your receipt as proof of payment.

## Test Optional

**Not all schools require Standardized Tests!** There are some schools that are “test optional,” and are well worth considering. A list of schools that are “test optional” is available here: <http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional> .

Please see Miss T to discuss your options if you feel that your scores are not an accurate reflection of your abilities or if you’re trying to decide whether or not to submit your scores (note that “test optional” institutions still accept scores). Additionally, athletes may go through the admissions process at one of these schools without submitting scores, but the NCAA still requires submission to the Clearinghouse.



# COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE

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## 9th Grade:

- Get involved in both school, church, and community activities. Choose activities that you enjoy in addition to activities that will grow and stretch you.
- Be diligent and get the best grades possible. Take good notes, review them on a regular basis, and turn in homework on time. Ask for help in hard classes.
- Choose classes that are challenging; choose Honors over advanced courses that are offered in 9th Grade. Colleges truly consider all of your high school courses. Your admission application starts now.
- Study for and take the PSAT in the fall to familiarize yourself with the test.

## 10th Grade:

- Continue your involvement in the school, church, and community activities in which you are interested. Take on leadership roles.
- Attend College Fairs in the region. Participate in one or more job shadowing opportunities.
- Continue to work hard academically. Keep your grades up!
- Read. Read. Read. Research has proven that students who read have higher SAT and ACT scores. Read what interests you ... sports, sci-fi, novels, poetry, etc.
- Begin career and college exploration. Think about what you would like to do with your life. Research schools that offer programs that are specific to your career choice.
- Consider taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). This free test provides career and academic information about you, with no obligation to join the military.

## 11th Grade:

### October

- Take a PURSUE trip. Do your research before selecting which trip you want to participate in and choose the trip that most aligns with your college and career goals.
- Prepare for the SAT and ACT in class and on your own through training programs or by reading SAT/ACT preparatory books.
- Attend the College Fairs in the region.
- Your focus this year should be *making good grades in challenging courses*. Junior year grades and course selection are very important to admissions committees.

### October-December

- Take the PSAT again. This test puts you in the running for the prestigious National Merit Scholarship, and helps prepare you for other standardized tests.

- Do some soul-searching about college. Consider size, proximity to home, Christian/non-Christian, cost, and whether it is realistic for you to attend based on your academic record.
- Plan college visits! You have four excused days to use for college visits. Use them!
- Memorize your social security number and CCA's CEEB Code; you will need both on many forms.

### January

- Challenge yourself! Senior year course selection is incredibly important in the college admissions process. Plan your courses wisely, and seek advice from teachers, parents, and the administration.
- Ramp up your review for the SAT. Check out the SAT prep resources offered through Khan Academy!

### February

- College research is very important at this point! Begin a tentative list of colleges in which you might be interested.

### March-April

- Decide when you want to take the SAT and/or the ACT. Register ontime and continue preparing for these tests. Register for the SAT at <http://www.collegeboard.org/> and ACT at <http://www.act.org/>.
- Attend area college fairs and consider traveling outside of Wilmington for fairs. Attend local College Nights and Special Programs. Continue to visit college campuses.

### May

- Take the SAT!!
- Finalize your college list, and set up your junior Interview with Miss T or the administration before you leave for the summer.

### June-July

- SAT and ACT are administered this month. If you didn't take it in May, take it in June.
- Visit more colleges! Your picture of the college campus will be different if you visit in the summer, since students won't be there. However, it's still worth visiting while you have time! Consider planning a trip to visit multiple schools in the same week.
- Do something meaningful this summer: participate in summer enrichment programs, volunteer, work, study, travel. Write down what you are learning and experiencing to reference in your college applications.
- Begin to research outside scholarships (<http://www.fastweb.com/>). There are a ton of opportunities to get scholarship money to take with you wherever you attend. If you wait until your senior year to research, you run the risk of missing important deadlines.
- Investigate the academic standards of all of the schools you are considering. Figure out where you fall in the standardized testing range, and decide if you want to retake your tests.

# SENIOR TO-DO LIST

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- Set up a meeting with Miss T in September/October to finalize your college list and begin discussing the application process. Please submit your essay and your extracurricular activities section for review. Allow 1 week for feedback.
- Create an email account that you will use only for the college search. This email address should be very simple and professional, ideally just your name.
- Make all of your social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) private, and be careful what you post on them. Colleges often check your personal sites as a part of the application review.
- If you plan to play NCAA sports in college, **notify the administration immediately**. You are required to register with the NAIA Eligibility Center (<http://www.playnaia.org/>).
- Complete the College Application Worksheet for each of your colleges, and submit a copy to Miss Tillinghast by October 15th.
- Attend the Essay Workshop in your senior English class in August. Work hard on your essay and ask your English teacher to review it. Allow him/her plenty of time to review it and give you feedback prior to the deadline.
- Request *at least two* teacher recommendations at least 3 weeks prior to the date you want them by. In order to request a letter, please fill out the Teacher Recommendation Request Form, and ask your teacher *in person*. Provide your teacher with your Request Form and a copy of your Resume.
- Submit Transcript Requests for *every, single school* to which you are applying. Requests must be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the college's deadline.
- Submit your test scores directly to colleges from the testing agencies! You are responsible for submitting ALL test scores. CCA will not submit scores. Official scores come only from the testing agency. Contact the ACT ([www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)) or SAT ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)) directly to have your scores sent to all schools to which you are applying.
- Fill out all necessary financial aid forms (FAFSA, CSS Profile, specific college forms) and submit them to the appropriate colleges by their deadlines. You are responsible for submitting all of this information. Miss T is available to help you with this, but CCA will not send any financial aid information.
- Notify Miss Tillinghast of **every admission decision you receive** (accepted, deferred, wait listed, or denied). Please also provide information regarding scholarships and grants awarded. All of this information will be kept confidential.

# SENIOR TIMELINE & IMPORTANT DATES

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## September

- Prepare your Activity List and Resume
- Visit the colleges you may be considering.
- Register for the SAT (<http://www.collegeboard.org/>) and ACT (<http://www.act.org/>) whether you are re-taking tests to improve your scores or taking it for the first time. Release scores to any colleges to which you are planning to apply.
- Research scholarships (<http://www.fastweb.com/>).

**September**—Essay writing workshop in Senior English classes.

**September** —Registration deadline for the October SAT. Please check website for exact dates.

**September 30**—The College Application Worksheet is due to Miss Tillinghast. This should include information on *every college* you are considering applying to, and include a list of all the teachers you have asked to recommend you.

## October

**October 1**—Student Assessment Form and Parent Assessment Form are due to Miss T. Student Assessment Forms are required for application submission.

**October**—SAT DATE. *You are strongly encouraged to take the SAT on this date. This should be (at least) your second time taking it, and ideally your last. Check website for exact date.*

**October**—Registration deadline for the November SAT. Check website for exact date.

**October 15** (*or 3 weeks prior to your deadline*)—Teacher recommendation forms are due to the College Counseling Office. We require a sealed letter of recommendation for each college that is not on the Common Application (if you're applying to four colleges, you need to provide your teacher

with four envelopes) AND an electronic letter of recommendation for EVERY school (which your teacher can send Miss Tillinghast via email). It is your responsibility to ensure that your teacher gives us your letter of recommendation.

**\*\*If you are applying via the Common Application, in addition to submitting the Teacher Recommendation Request Form to your teacher, you also need to put their email address into the Recommender field on the Common Application. It is your responsibility to follow up with them to make sure they have received (and know how to use) this form.\*\***

### **November/December**

**November 1**—Last day to submit your Senior College Application Information Form to Miss Tillinghast.

**November**—Last date to register for the December SAT. Please check website for exact date.

**December**—December SAT date. Please check website for exact date. *\*\*This is the last test date accepted by most selective colleges\*\**

### **January**

- File the FAFSA online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. Complete as soon as possible using parents' tax return information from the last year.
- Continue applying for scholarships, noting deadlines.

### **March/April**

- **All necessary financial aid forms should be completed by March 1 at the latest.** Some schools have very early Financial Aid deadlines (February 15). It is your responsibility to ensure that you have submitted everything by each school's deadline, even if you haven't heard back from them regarding your admission status.
- As you receive your admission decisions, let Miss Tillinghast know. Set up an appointment to discuss all of your options.
- Keep working hard in school. *Colleges may rescind offers of admission based on senior year grades.*
- Continue discussing your future plans with Miss Tillinghast and make your college decision.

### **May**

- Take AP exams (if applicable). Submit your scores to your future college through the testing agency. CCA does not submit AP scores on your behalf.
- If you have been WAITLISTED at the college you want to attend (and would attend if taken off the waitlist), set up a meeting with Miss Tillinghast **before May 1** to talk about your options.

**May 1—CANDIDATE REPLY DATE. The matriculation deposit (or enrollment fee) at the college of your choice usually must be paid by this date.** Once you have paid your admission deposit at the school of your choice, make sure you decline your offer of admission to all other schools *in writing*. Be gracious and let them know which school you are planning on attending.

# TRANSCRIPT AND APPLICATION INFORMATION

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It is Concord Christian Academy's recommendation that all seniors apply to AT LEAST three colleges or universities. Students are encouraged to consider a wide range of schools, both in-state and out-of-state and to be realistic about your options. Do note that this requires extensive research on the part of the student. Take advantage of the resources you are afforded at CCA.

The following is advice from the Princeton Review on categorizing your college options.

Do not include a school on your list that you wouldn't be willing to attend. As your list takes shape, include schools that fall into one of the following three categories: **match, reach and safety.**

A **match** school is one where your academic credentials fall *well within* (or even exceed) the school's range for the average freshman. There are no guarantees, but it's not unreasonable to be accepted to several of your match schools.

A **reach** school is one where your academic credentials fall *below* the school's range for the average freshman. Reach schools are long-shots, but they should still be possible. If you have a 2.0 GPA, Harvard is not a reach school—it's a dream.

A **safety** school is one where your academic credentials fall *above* the school's range for the average freshman. You can be reasonably certain that you will be admitted to your safety schools.

Apply to a few schools from each category (many applicants apply to around three reach schools, three match schools and two safety schools). *Separating them will help you manage your expectations throughout the admissions process* and ensure that you set ambitious goals and give yourself some back-up options.

In order for our office to guarantee that your materials are sent in on time and to the appropriate places, we require that you follow all of the procedures laid out in this handbook and that you use the appropriate forms. Please use the **Transcript Request Form** for *every school to which you are applying*. Your **Senior College Application Information Form** will help us ensure that all of your applications are complete.

**REMEMBER:** It is your responsibility to submit these forms on time, to submit your own college applications, and to ensure that your teacher recommendations have been received by our office on time. Failure to do any of those things will jeopardize your chances of acceptance.



## Concord Christian Academy Senior Transcript Request Form

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ College OR Scholarship Program: \_\_\_\_\_

**I am applying:**

Early Decision     Early Action     Regular Decision

**The deadline is:** \_\_\_\_\_

I had (or will have) my **SAT** and /or **ACT** scores sent directly from the testing agency  
*\*It is the student's responsibility to have official scores sent from the ACT and /or SAT to each college/university*

I applied (or will) via the Common Application OR  This college/university has a separate application

**Teacher Recommendations to be sent with the transcript:**

*\*We will mail documents to colleges only when we have all of these items. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the College Counseling Office receives your teacher recommendations (one sealed copy and one electronic copy) by October 15 or three weeks prior to your deadline, whichever gives us more time.*

Recommender 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommender 2: \_\_\_\_\_

I request that a current (mid-year) transcript, final academic reports, and other pertinent information requested by the college or scholarship program be submitted to the above named college or scholarship program. I further give permission for information supplied in my Self-Assessment Form and resume to be communicated by Concord Christian Academy to the colleges and scholarship programs to which I apply. I voluntarily waive my rights of access to any information contained in any of the recommendation forms or letters and agree that the information shall remain confidential. *I will call before the deadline to confirm that the college received all my materials (and are accurate)! I have or will send my SAT and ACT scores via the testing agencies.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature



**Concord Christian Academy**  
**Senior College Application Information Form**  
**Due November 1<sup>st</sup> at the Latest**

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**School #1 Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I applied:**  Early Decision  Early Action  Regular Decision **The deadline is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I will be notified of my admission status on:** \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, this is a  Safety  Match  Reach

**Is there anything left to submit for this application?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**School #2 Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I applied:**  Early Decision  Early Action  Regular Decision **The deadline is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I will be notified of my admission status on:** \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, this is a  Safety  Match  Reach

**Is there anything left to submit for this application?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**School #3 Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I applied:**  Early Decision  Early Action  Regular Decision **The deadline is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I will be notified of my admission status on:** \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, this is a  Safety  Match  Reach

**Is there anything left to submit for this application?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**REMINDER:** If there is anything left to do on any given application (January Regular Decision Deadlines), this form is not a substitute for the Transcript Request Form. If you are applying to more than 3 schools, use as many of these forms as you need (School #1=School #4, etc.).



# LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

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It is important to think strategically about who you want to ask to write your recommendation letters. Students are *strongly* encouraged to waive the right to access all recommendations, as colleges give confidential recommendations significantly more weight.

There are schools, generally large state schools, which do not require teacher recommendations, and some that allow non-teachers (i.e. coaches, mentors, youth pastors, pastors etc.) to submit recommendations. Make sure that you read the application carefully. *If letters are not required but accepted, send them. If the college specifically asks that you do not send recommendations, do not send them.* It is ultimately your responsibility to know and follow each college's guidelines.

*Some things to consider when selecting recommenders:*

- Most selective colleges require two recommendations from teachers in academic core courses (English, Foreign Language, History, Math, and Science).
- All recommendations should come from teachers who taught you in your Junior or Senior year.
- If you ask a non-teacher to write an additional letter, you are responsible for providing him/her a stamped and pre-addressed envelope. They should mail their recommendation directly to the college.

*Information and Deadlines for Teacher Recommendations:*

**In order to ensure a Teacher Recommendation, you are required to give your teacher at least 3 weeks to write your letter.** Please ask your teacher *in person* to write your letter, and provide him/her with your Teacher Recommendation Request Form and your resume.

**October 1st**— The College Application Worksheet is due to Miss Tillinghast. This should include information on *every college* you are considering applying to, and include a list of all the teachers you have asked to recommend you.

**October 15 (or 3 weeks prior to your deadline)**—Teacher recommendation forms are due to the College Counseling Office. We require a sealed letter of recommendation for each college that is not on the Common Application (if you're applying to four colleges, you need to provide your teacher with four envelopes) AND an electronic letter of recommendation for EVERY school (which your teacher can send Miss Tillinghast via email). It is your responsibility to ensure that all teacher recommendations are returned.

**\*\*If you are applying via the Common Application, in addition to submitting the Teacher Recommendation Request Form to your teacher, you also need to put their email address into the Recommender field on the Common Application. It is your responsibility to follow up with them to make sure they have received (and know how to use) this form.\*\***



## Concord Christian Academy Teacher Recommendation Request Form

Give this to your teacher along with your resume.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**First** College Deadline: \_\_\_\_\_

Colleges I'm applying to: \_\_\_\_\_

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Number of sealed letters to send to Miss Tillinghast: \*Only for schools that are NOT on the Common App\*

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1. I'm asking you to write on my behalf because...
2. The particular aspect of, or experience in, your class that stretched me most was...
3. The piece(s) of work that I consider my best effort is (are)...
4. My proudest moment in your class was...
5. What I found to be most challenging about this class was...

*Teachers, please return your sealed letters to Miss Tillinghast by October 15 (OR 3 weeks prior to the student's first college deadline). If the student is applying via the Common Application, you should receive an online invitation from them to recommend them. Let them know if you did not receive it or have any questions about it. If you are including a college or university name in your letter, be conscious of which school you are writing to! It is the student's responsibility to remind you of this deadline.*

# ESSAY WRITING

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Essays are incredibly important in the college admissions process. They show who you are, what makes you tick, what you value, and how you will “fit” with the college/university culture. They add “life” to your college application, and can differentiate you from the sea of other applicants.

College Admission Offices read *a lot* of essays so avoiding overused and cliché topics is incredibly important.

It is highly recommended that you avoid the following topics:

- A sports-related injury
- Winning the big game
- Your political/religious beliefs (If applying to a secular school)
- How your community service/mission trip changed your life
- Your family’s lake/beach/mountain house
- Your international travel

Dave Marcus, author of *Acceptance*, explains it this way:

Here’s an essay that’s sure to make an admissions officer reach for the triple grande latte to stay awake: *“I spent [choose one: a summer vacation/a weekend/three hours] volunteering with the poor in [Honduras/ Haiti/ Louisiana] and realized that [I am privileged/I enjoy helping others/people there are happy with so little].”*

“I would love to have a student answer the question, ‘Why is it that you have everything and they have nothing?’” said Cezar Mesquita, Former Director of Admissions at the College of Wooster. “Or ‘What did *others* learn from your participation in the trip?’”

Consider these “do’s and don’ts” from the National Association of College and Admission Counseling:

## **Don’t:**

- Try to be funny if you’re not
- Use words from a Thesaurus
- Try to be “cute”
- Exceed the word or page limit
- Use the name of the wrong college
- Be cynical or critical
- Have someone else write your college essay

**Do:**

- Follow all instructions!
- Be concise; more is not always better.
- Prepare to prepare! This is a process, not an event. Allow plenty of time for brainstorming, writing, editing, and re-writing.
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread.
- Write in your own words and let your voice shine through.
- Let the college know how you think.
- Write about something you care about.
- Write and rewrite. Put it away for a few days and look at it again.
- Paint a picture of the real you, not who you think they want you to be.
- Be truthful.
- Have someone proofread your essay, but don't get too many opinions!

Many colleges have examples of great essays on their website. Soak this information up! This can help you get a better sense of what that particular college wants to see in an essay and can get your creative juices flowing. Here are a couple of examples:

- Connecticut College: <http://www.conncoll.edu/admission/apply/essays-that-worked/>
- Davidson College: <http://www.davidson.edu/admission-and-financial-aid/connect-with-davidson/google-maps-project>
- Hamilton College: <http://www.hamilton.edu/magazine/summer08/more-essays-that-worked>
- John Hopkins University: <http://apply.jhu.edu/apply/essays/>
- Stanford University: [http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article\\_id=31010](http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=31010)
- Tufts University: <http://admissions.tufts.edu/apply/essay-questions/past-essays/>

# ACTIVITY LISTS & RESUMES

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## What is an Activity List?

An activity list is a written document that summarizes and describes your academic awards, community service, club involvement, leadership, work experience, outstanding accomplishments, and skills. It is a word picture, in abbreviated form, of who you are and what you have accomplished already. Check out this insight provide by the Vanderbilt University Office of Admission as to how to write a great Activity List: <http://admissions.vanderbilt.edu/vandybloggers/2013/10/how-to-extracurricular-activity-list/>

The activity list allows you to demonstrate what you are passionate about and what you will bring to that particular college or university's campus. It is important to keep this information in a safe spot, because it will be asked for in a number of ways on different college applications as well as scholarship applications. *It is helpful to provide your counselor and your recommenders a copy of your Activity List and/or Resume.*

## What is a Resume?

A resume contains almost exactly the same information as an Activity List, it's just formatted differently. Often, colleges will ask for a resume in addition to the Activity List that you supplied elsewhere on the application. The format of a resume is very important, since you will be attaching this as a separate document. Generally, schools have a specific way they want the Activity List formatted, *and you should follow those guidelines exactly.* If a school asks for an Activity List (like the Common Application does), do NOT submit a resume instead of an activities section. Do both.

**Bottom line: never leave the activities section blank.**

## Getting started:

Start by taking stock of you. Make a list of your educational history, your work experiences, your activities and accomplishments, and your skills. Get a parent and/or a good friend to help you remember everything from your high school career. The next step will be to reorganize your information and reduce it to a one-page document.

*The Common Application* asks for the following information in this way: "List below any extracurricular activities, community service, and family responsibilities in which you have participated. Indicate in what grade you participated in these activities and explain your involvement." **You can list up to ten different activities.** The questions asked are:

- What grades were you involved in this activity (9-12)
- Average number of hours per week and the number of weeks per year that you participated
- Briefly explain your involvement and responsibilities.
- Include leadership positions held.
- List any outstanding achievement, awards earned or instruments played.

Adding your activities to the Common Application looks like this:



### Helpful tips:

- List your most important and impressive facts and activities first.
- Highlight specific and relevant details about your activities.
- Do not limit yourself to CCA activities. Include activities like volunteer work, mission trips, jobs, or internships that you have had outside of school.
- Nothing is too small to include on your resume. However, the activity list only allows you to list 10 activities.
- Be sure to describe your roles and accomplishments with strong **action words** and key terms that will pop out, usually ones that signify leadership and team roles that you have had. This could include words like: *team work, team player, multi-tasked, executed, organized, maintained, supervised, managed, directed, developed, implemented, counseled, assisted, starred, volunteered, led, participated, completed, encouraged, acted, played, wrote, performed.*
- Value white space! Your resume should be clear, concise, and easy to follow.
- Be honest. Admission Offices know the difference between accurate information and meaningful involvement and a “padded” resume.
- Keep your resume to one page. If this is an issue, eliminate lengthy descriptions if possible and reduce the size of your font. If your resume is too short, consider adding a “hobbies and interests” section that can include activities you enjoy doing in your spare time.
- The wording of your activity list is as important as the look. You may have to write several rough drafts to come up with the one that will really shine. Here are a few rules to keep in mind:
  - Use matching verb tenses
  - Keep descriptions short (no more than 3-4 lines)
  - Full sentences are not necessary, but make sure your punctuation is consistent.

# SAMPLE RESUME

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**John Justin Johnson**

[jjj@sawyer.com](mailto:jjj@sawyer.com)

**89 Right Road  
Wilmington, DE 19810**

**Phone:** (302)555-5555  
**SS#:** 255-55-5555

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## Extracurricular Activities

Staff Photographer (School Yearbook), grades 9-11  
Photo Editor (School Yearbook), grade 12

## Athletic Participation

Varsity Soccer, grades 8-12

- Team Captain, grades 10-12
- Average 2 goals per game, grades 11-12

## Awards and Honors

Honor Roll (all A's), grades 9-12  
National Honor Society Induction, spring 2014  
Most Valuable Player, Boys Varsity Soccer, grades 11-12

## Volunteer Activities

Big Brother Program, grades 11-12

- Mentor elementary students

Summer Mission Trips, Concord Baptist Church

- Dominican Republic, summer grade 11
- Mexico, summer grade 10

## Employment

Chick-fil-A, summer grade 9 — summer grade 11  
High Point Camp, summer grade 11, Geigerstown, PA.

# COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

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Some colleges **require** an interview as a part of the admissions process. This may be conducted on campus, at a public place in Wilmington, on the phone, or via Skype. If an institution *requires* an interview, they are taking this portion of your application very seriously. It is important to be prepared to convince the interviewer that you are a candidate worthy of admission!

Other colleges have an interview as an **optional component** of the admissions process. You are highly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. Interviews generally help candidates; however, a bad optional interview can very much hinder your ability to be accepted to that particular institution. Bottom line: BE PREPARED!

## Helpful Tips for the Interview:

1. Arrange for the interview ahead of time. Never drop in and expect to be interviewed! Similarly, do your research on how interviews are conducted and scheduled. If a school says they don't offer interviews on campus, don't email an Admission Counselor and ask if you can interview on campus.
2. Arrive to the interview ten minutes early. Remember your interviewer's name, and use proper etiquette in introducing yourself. Do not bring your parents.
3. Familiarize yourself with the college's admission materials: the application, viewbook, and catalog. Never be caught in a situation where they ask you about the essay prompt on the application and you haven't seen it. If you have already submitted an application, reread the essays you submitted and what you wrote about why you want to attend that particular school.
4. Bring your resume!
5. Be aware of current events and be able to talk about them.
6. Be prepared to answer questions about your high school record, standardized test scores (SAT, ACT, and AP), and discrepancies between the two. If there are obvious discrepancies or weaknesses, take the initiative to bring it up.
7. Have a great answer for why you feel the college might be suitable for you and how/what you will contribute to their community. **This should be very specific to that particular college. Do not give generic answers ("It's a pretty campus," "the people seem great," etc.).**
8. Be prepared to discuss your strengths and weaknesses eloquently.
9. Ask for your interviewer's business card. Send a hand-written thank you note the day after your interview!
10. Feel free to ask a series of questions that you have prepared in advance. You're welcome to bring a notebook and pen to write down responses.



# INTERACTING WITH COLLEGES

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## VisitingCollegeCampuses

The campus visit is one of the most important components of the college search process. While you're there, you'll get a real sense for what it would be like to be a college student on that particular campus. Oftentimes, students change their minds about what they want in a school once they are on campus. KEEP AN OPEN MIND!!

At the latest, students should start visiting schools in the fall of their junior year. Each CCA junior has two college visit days, and each senior has two more (for four total days over the two years). Use your time wisely! Take advantage of long weekends, and plan your visit with the college as far in advance as possible. Do your research online before you call or email the school. Most schools have an online and automated system through which you can sign up for the visit.

### *Tips for the College Visit:*

- Don't schedule more than two visits per day. Give yourself time to look around campus after your tour, and make sure you're on time to your second tour.
- Learn about the college before you go. Print out information from the website and take it with you to look over on your way to the visit. Be familiar with the majors offered that appeal to you. Do not inquire about a major that the college does not offer. Be sure to compare your record of achievement with what the college is seeking. Prepare several questions in advance.
- Dress in layers (but look neat and well groomed), wear comfortable walking shoes and pack a travel umbrella; plan to take the campus tour even if a light rain is falling.
- Write down your impressions after each visit, and begin building a ranked list of colleges and "must haves" in your college experience.
- Be on your best behavior! Colleges run on tight schedules. Be sure to keep up with the tour group in order to not slow everyone down and invest yourself into really listening and learning on the tour.
- Meet the admissions office personnel and the tour guide with a firm handshake and maintain eye contact as you talk and listen. Note the name of anyone you interacted with, and follow up with a handwritten thank you note, thanking them for their time and indicating what you liked most about the campus.
- Read student bulletin boards and publications. This information can tell you a lot about the culture and climate of the school and its students.
- How you feel on campus matters! Trust yourself, and be okay with walking away because you don't see yourself at that school.

*Questions to consider asking on a College Visit (after you do your research, and without sounding like a robot!):*

- *Course load:* How many classes does the average student take per semester or quarter? How demanding is the academic workload? What are the most difficult majors? The most popular majors? On the average, how many hours per week do students majoring in these areas study?
- *Registering for classes:* How easy it is to get the classes you want? Are classes in certain areas set aside for majors only? What are the most popular classes? How do you register for classes? How do incoming freshmen register?
- *Majors:* What are the four or five most popular majors? What are the weaker majors? What are any unusual and unique majors or programs of study? What are traditional majors that your institution does not offer and why? Are you allowed to design your own major or double major?
- *Learning environment:* Is the academic atmosphere traditional or progressive? Conservative or liberal? Career-oriented? What does the college or university emphasize? What does its statement of purpose say?
- *Class size:* What is the average class size for freshmen? How many teaching assistants will the average freshman encounter teaching a class? What is the average class size for upperclassmen? Are classes more likely be taught lecture style or in seminars?
- *Graduation rates:* What percentage of your freshmen return for their sophomore year? What percentage of students graduate in four years? What is the percentage of your undergraduates that go on to medical school? Law school? Graduate school?
- *Honor Code:* Is there an honor code and how is it enforced?
- *Academic support:* Do freshmen have individual advisors? How often do they meet with their advisor? What is the system by which they are assigned and how often are they available? Are tutoring or support services available? Is there a writing center? Are the support services free or on a fee basis?
- *Orientation:* Is orientation required of all freshmen? When does orientation occur? How extensive is orientation? Are there orientation or special university classes required of all entering students?
- *Academic extras:* Are there opportunities for study abroad? Internships? Work- study? 3-2 programs? With what colleges? Are scholarships available for these programs and how do they compare in cost to other university expenses (i.e. standard rates of tuition)?
- *Career options:* What firms recruit graduates on campus? Which universities and professional schools accept graduates? What percentage of the school's graduates are admitted to the graduate or professional school of their choice? What percentage of students in a specific major are immediately employed upon graduation?
- *Financial aid:* What percentage of students receive financial aid? What merit-based scholarships are available? What percentage of incoming students qualify for these? What is the average award of need-based aid? What is the breakdown of that amount? What is the average grant for an incoming freshman?
- *Endowment:* Is the school financially stable? Does it have an endowment? What are the targeted areas for growth?
- *Living arrangements:* Where do most freshmen live on campus? Are there dorm restrictions? What percentage of students lives on campus? Are students required to live on campus? What are the various options for housing?

- *Transportation:* What transportation is necessary or advisable? Can freshmen have cars? Are bikes common? Does the school operate a shuttle service? Is there a fee? Is good public transportation available in the area?
- *Campus life:* What is typical student life like? What do most students do on the weekends? How often do students generally go home during the term? What opportunities exist for spiritual growth? How important are fraternities and sororities? How competitive are athletic teams? How strong is the intramural program? What are the current student issues on campus?
- *Cross application:* Students who apply at your college also apply at what other colleges/universities?
- *Student Personality:* How would you describe a typical student on your campus? What are the strongest selling points of your college/university?

### **Making the Most of College Fairs**

College Fairs are great opportunities to learn about colleges you've never heard of, get more information on schools you don't know much about, and continue to interact with your top choice schools. **ALL JUNIORS AND SENIORS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND A COLLEGE FAIR.**

*Consider these tips for success from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill:*

- **Narrow.** Most college fairs will provide a list of all schools that will be at the event.  
By going through this list ahead of time, you can strategically plan which booths to visit at the fair. Picture the type of college environment you want, and ask yourself some questions to help narrow down the colleges at the fair. Would you feel more comfortable at small, medium, or large school? What are your academic interests? Are you looking for an urban, suburban, or rural setting? How close to home do you want to be?
- **Research.** Once you have a better idea of which types of schools you want to focus on, you can make a list of schools to research. Don't limit yourself to colleges or universities that you've already heard of – instead, take this opportunity to explore all the options that meet your criteria. You can start doing some background research before the college fair. Start with each school's website, or admissions website if they have one. Often you'll be able to find listings of opportunities offered by each school, admissions statistics, school rankings, and more. Schools provide this information on their websites for **you**, so take advantage of its availability. This research will help you save time and ask more personal questions at the fair, because you already know the basic information and admissions facts about the school.
- **Ask.** Admissions representatives attend college fairs because they love their school and are excited about meeting prospective students, so don't be afraid to approach us and ask your questions. We promise we won't bite! Since you've already done your research online, you can use this opportunity to ask questions only a human could answer – questions that help you characterize the student body, get a better picture of campus, understand the academic

atmosphere, etc. These admissions officers probably know the university better than anyone else – or at least know who to ask if they don't know the answer to your question.

- **Listen.** Many times there will be a group of people at each table. While you're waiting for your turn to ask a question, listen to what others are asking. Instead of repeating the same questions, listen for their responses and then use your own question to follow up.
- **Have fun.** Don't just go to the tables of the schools you already know about or even just the schools you've heard of. Branch out! At worst, you've spent two minutes talking to someone you'll never see again. At best, you'll learn about a new school that may be a perfect match for you!
- **Follow-Up.** When you sign in or register with each school at the college fair (make sure you do this!) they will take the first step in building a relationship with you by adding you to their database or mailing list. You can maintain this relationship by following up with the admissions officer if you got their card, or returning to the admissions website to update your applicant profile. Stay connected via email and social media so you don't miss important application updates or special opportunities.

### **Emailing Colleges**

If you haven't already created an email account just for your college search, do so as soon as possible. This email address should be straight forward and professional, ideally just your name. Check this email often, as it will be your primary mode of communication with colleges. You can delete it after you have a university email address at the school of your choice.

*Consider these tips for emailing from Washington University:*

#### **Do:**

- ALWAYS check the website before sending an email. Do not email a counselor with a question that has been answered on the website.
- Choose an appropriate email address.
- Give your full name and high school in each message.
- Use appropriate punctuation, grammar, and spelling.
- Always use a salutation. Do your research to figure out who you Admission Counselor and address him/her by name. If you absolutely cannot find a name, use something generic (i.e. Dear Admissions Officer).
- Be as polite and respectful in an email as you would in a face-to-face meeting or telephone conversation.
- Double check the email address of the recipient before hitting "send".
- Proofread your email, *especially* if you are sending an email from your handheld device!
- If you have a lot of questions, email your Admission Counselor to ask to set up a time to talk on the phone.

**Don't:**

- Use “IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!” or “Please read!!!” as a subject for your email.
- Include any attachments.
- Send anything confidential via email.
- Send blanket emails to a lot of schools at once. Do your research and then ask specific questions.

# FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

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Financial Aid and Scholarships are, in some ways, the most important part of the college search process and, at the same time, the most confusing. *Research about Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities should begin, at the latest, in your junior year.* Do not wait until you've already been accepted to a school to apply for aid or scholarships; at that point, it is often too late.

The two primary sources of need-based Financial Aid are the FAFSA ([www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)) and the CSS Profile ([www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)). All schools require the FAFSA, and some schools require the CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA. **You are strongly encouraged to fill out both forms, even if you don't think your family will qualify for any aid.** You will not be given any financial aid without these forms, and you will be unable to appeal your financial aid package without them.

It is each student's responsibility to seek out merit based scholarship opportunities. Begin with the CCA College Counseling website, where multiple links are provided to help you get started. *It is also incredibly important that each student stays on top of specific college scholarships, requirements of each, and the corresponding deadlines.* It is VERY common for merit-based scholarship applications to be due BEFORE you find out if you have been accepted. Make sure you make note of any scholarship deadlines, and make sure everything is submitted well in advance of that deadline. If you require anything from the CCA (letters of recommendation, additional transcripts, etc.), please notify us and give us a reasonable amount of time to respond. Additionally, we will notify you of scholarship nomination opportunities as we receive them. If you are interested in being nominated for one of these scholarships, come to the CCA Office and let us know! Be prepared to explain why you want to be nominated, why you are considering that school, and why you deserve to be nominated above all of your peers.

*Consider these tips:*

- **File your FAFSA as early as January of the senior year.** Some schools award on a first come, first served basis. According to BusinessWeek, it's easiest to file your taxes first and then use that as a reference point for filling out the FAFSA, but you can also estimate fields on the FAFSA form using your last pay stub and last year's tax return.
- **Be honest.** Make sure you read each form carefully, complete it in its entirety, and do not report any inaccurate information.
- **Prepare yourself** for a wide range of packages. Each college is different in the way they award money, and each student's competitiveness is going to be different depending on the school.
- **Use the Financial Aid Offices** at each school as a resource. Don't be afraid to ask questions to make sure that you're doing everything right.

- **Keep copies of everything you submit**, noting the date that you submitted each document. If possible, send documents using Certified Mail, so you know exactly when they were received and by whom.
- **You do not have to accept** any of the loan-based aid that you are offered. Call the Office of Financial Aid at the school to find out which of your offers need to be paid back.
- If a college subscribes to the National Candidate Reply Date of May 1 (and most do), **you do not have to notify them until May 1** as to whether or not you are accepting their offer of Financial Aid or Scholarship.