

# THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S GUIDE COLLEGE<sup>to</sup> ADMISSIONS



A comprehensive guide to navigating and surviving the college admissions process for students and their parents.

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# INTRODUCTION

Time to apply to college: words that strike fear in the hearts of high school juniors and seniors. But students need not tremble and break out into a sweat. While the college application process will always be associated with at least some stress, the more you know about it, the better you will manage and the more likely you are to emerge relatively unscathed. To help you, we've interviewed six admissions experts to compile the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide to the college admissions process.

The following guide explores important aspects of the admissions process including:

- The application process and an explanation of who is responsible for which tasks
- How to go about researching schools and creating a short list
- An overview of standardized tests
- The different types of application deadline options
- A break down of the college application into all its components, and guidance for writing a great essay
- The financial aid application process, which parallels the college application process
- Guidelines for deciding which college to attend
- Useful tips from admissions officers on how to be a successful applicant
- What community college students and graduates need to know when transferring to universities

Most importantly, this guide helps demystify the college application process overall. Print it out and refer to it often. Your sanity might depend on it.

# THE PROCESS AND THE PLAYERS

Experts agree that the college admissions process starts long before the first application is submitted. In fact, many in the educational field say students as young as freshman should be thinking about where they want to go to college and how they plan to get there.

Although application deadlines may vary by school, here is a basic overview of what should happen in high school as students prepare for college.

## FRESHMAN YEAR

Begin to explore careers.

Meet with guidance counselor to create a high school academic schedule that will support college goals.

Visit college websites.

Consider taking the ACT Aspire exam to learn more about academic strengths and related career opportunities.

## SOPHOMORE YEAR

Review freshman grades to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Seek out help for difficult subjects as needed.

Continue to research colleges and careers. Request additional information from colleges.

Get involved in extracurricular activities.

Take the PSAT

## JUNIOR YEAR

Meet with guidance counselor to confirm class schedule is in line with college goals.

Attend college fairs and meet with representatives who visit the high school.

Begin taking on-campus tours of schools.

Enroll in test prep classes.

Take the SAT or ACT

## SENIOR YEAR

Retake the SAT or ACT, if needed

Create final short list of colleges and find their application forms and requirements

Ask for letters of recommendation

Write college application essay

Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in January

Research and apply for scholarships

Submit college applications

Review financial aid packages offered by the schools accepting your application.

Make final choice and enroll.

Within the four-year process are six sets of players. Here's how a college admissions team breaks down and who's responsible for what:

"High school students and parents should begin the admissions process long before students reach their senior year. During freshman and sophomore years in high school, students should begin researching colleges and universities for programs and majors they are interested in."

**Frederick E. Suttles,**  
*Associate Director of the Office of Admissions*

**The Student:** Even though a lot of people will help make college a reality, the student is the one who is going to make it all happen. The student gets to decide career goals and whittle down college choices. The student has to take tests and fill out the applications. Most importantly, the student needs to communicate openly with other members of the college admissions team and ask for help or guidance when needed.

**The Parents:** Parents come in all varieties. Some want to be an active part of the entire admissions process while others are hands-off. Regardless of how active parents want to be in the admissions process, students should talk to parents regularly about their progress. In addition, early in the process, students need to find out if parents plan to help pay for college and how much they can afford.

**The High School Counselor:** High school counselors can be an excellent resource for both students and parents. They can typically do all of the following:

- Review high school curriculum and help plan a college-prep class schedule
- Connect students with professionals or career fairs that will help students explore jobs
- Notify families of college fairs or arrange for students to meet college representatives visiting the high school
- Provide scholarship and financial aid information

**The Independent Counselor:** Not everyone will have an independent counselor. These professionals provide similar services as a high school guidance counselor, but families pay for their services so receive more in-depth, personalized information and guidance. Students may use an independent counselor, otherwise known as an independent educational consultant, when they feel a high school counselor isn't able to meet their needs. For example, an independent counselor may be called in to help find the right placement for students with disabilities. They may also be used by students who attend schools where guidance counselors have large workloads and are unable to provide one-on-one advising.

**The Teachers:** Teachers do more than provide students with their high school instruction. They also play an integral role in the college admissions process. Most college applications require teacher recommendations. In addition, teachers can arrange for students to receive academic assistance to improve grades if needed. Finally, teachers may be familiar with college programs in the field of specialty or have connections at local colleges and universities, both of which may be helpful to students as they explore college and career options.

**The College Admissions Officer:** The final player on a college admissions team is the college admissions officer. These individuals work in the admissions offices of colleges and universities and can be invaluable resources to students and parents. They often do all the following:

- Send information regarding their school
- Visit high schools to meet with students
- Arrange campus tours
- Answer questions about the institution or the admissions process
- Provide financial aid information

Now that you're familiar with the basics of the college admissions process and players, let's take a closer look at the seven main steps involved.

## STEP 1: RESEARCH

The first can sometimes be the most difficult. Marie DeMego, vice president with the career planning firm ConnectEDU, estimates there are nearly 7,000 postsecondary institutions available to students. These range from vocational programs offering certificates to community colleges to private and public four-year colleges.

Narrowing that list to something more manageable can be a tall order. Students can begin by ranking their priorities. Consider the criteria in the box on this page and number from 1-6 which factors are most important to you.

### Factors for College Selection

- Location
- School Size
- Available Majors
- Academics or Extracurricular Activities
- Reputation
- Type of School (i.e. religious, single-sex, etc.)

To find schools that match their priorities, students should utilize both the Internet as well as other players on their college admissions team.

High school and independent counselors can help identify institutions that may be a good match. For students who have a particular major in mind, teachers in that subject may also be able to provide input. High schools may also have other resources, such as the college and career readiness program Naviance, available to help students explore their options.

Students should also go online to research colleges and universities. In addition to looking at the "prospective students" section of the website, students should visit the department page of their expected major as well as look up admission requirements.

“It’s ok for students to change their majors, but they should narrow their focus to avoid lost time and unneeded classes.”

**Rita Toliver-Roberts,**  
*Vice President of Academic  
Advancement*

While institutions may not require freshmen to declare a major, undeclared students will want to look at a school’s policy regarding when a major must be chosen and how easy it is to switch between majors. For example, both Adelphi University and Cedar Crest College allow students to wait until the end of their sophomore year to select a major.

However, if a student is planning to take two years to declare a major, they may want to look for a college with a strong liberal arts program. These programs can help them explore a number of subjects while filling general degree prerequisites. Then, they can spend their final two years focusing on the major requirements.

## Additional Resources

**Big Future:** The College Board provides this handy research tool. Students can find colleges based upon major, location or cost. There’s also a special tool for those who aren’t sure where to start.

**Peterson’s College Match Tool:** Peterson’s, the publisher of an annual directory of colleges, also has an online college match tool to help with research. Students can search by type of college or keyword.

**Independent Educational Consultants Association:** The official association of independent counselors. Visitors can read about what colleges are seeking in high school students as well as search for independent counselors in their area.

## STEP 2: THE SHORT LIST

Once students have narrowed their list of potential schools, it is time to create a short list of institutions worthy of an application.

While students could certainly send applications to all the schools that interest them, that would be time-consuming, not to mention costly since most schools charge an application fee.

Instead, students should divide their narrowed list into three categories:

- 1. Safety list:** These are schools a student is virtually guaranteed acceptance. The institution may have open enrollment – meaning it accepts everyone who applies – or the student’s academic achievement and test scores far exceed the minimum requirements.
- 2. Likely list:** Likely schools are those a student can reasonably expect to be accepted. The student’s GPA and test scores fall well within the school requirements.
- 3. Stretch list:** The final category consists of a student’s “dream schools”. These include institutions where a student would like to enroll at, but may not meet all the admissions requirements. Students may be admitted if they have an exceptional essay or a strong record of extracurricular activities, but the possibility is unclear.

The next step is to decide which schools from each list are worth completing an application. A good rule of thumb is to apply to the top three choices from the likely list. In addition, select two institutions from the safety list as fall back options.

As for the stretch list, it may be best to simply eliminate those schools from consideration. However, if a student feels strongly about applying to a dream school, that application should only be completed after those for the likely and safety schools. Otherwise, students risk getting distracted on an application for a school that's a stretch. It's best to focus time and energy on more likely schools first.

At this point, students should have a good idea of what classes and opportunities are available at each school. Now it is time to find one that has the right campus culture and institutional fit. This is the last piece to deciding which five or six schools will receive applications.

Below are some of the big things you should consider when evaluating campus culture:

- Number of students living on-campus vs. off-campus
- Average age of students
- School size (enrollment and physical size)
- Class sizes
- On-campus entertainment options
- Student associations or club organizations
- Proximity to urban areas

While students can read about many of these factors, there is no substitute for actually walking the campus and meeting other students and faculty. When arranging for tours, students should ask about visiting dorms and common areas on campus. They may also want to see the buildings that house their major department as well as computer labs and gym facilities, if available.

## Additional Resources

**National Association for College Admission Counseling:** The NACAC offers a number of student and parent resources on its websites. Families can find application tips and look for college fairs in their area. The association also offers an application fee waiver program for those with limited financial resources.

**10 Step Campus Culture Quiz:** While serving as a consultant for Sino-American Education, college advice expert Joyce Slayton Mitchell put together this 10-question quiz to help students decide which campus culture is right for them. Although it isn't scientific, it can provide insight into which type of school will offer the right institutional fit.

**College List Planning:** The experts at Peterson's answer questions regarding how to develop a college short list. Topics include how to decide whether schools are likely or a stretch and how many safety schools to include on your list.

## STEP 3: TESTING

Before students can submit their first application, they generally must complete one or more standardized tests. These test scores may be used by schools to make admissions decisions or to determine class placement. In some cases, standardized tests can even result in college credit before a student steps foot on campus.

The following are the common forms of standardized tests:

## SAT

The SAT – originally named for Scholastic Aptitude Test – is one of the most widely required college admission tests in the country. It was developed by the College Board and is broken into three components: reading, writing and math.

A perfect score on the test is 2400 while 1500 is said to be the average. The College Board says half of students will take the test twice – often once during the spring of their junior year and again in the fall of their senior year.

## ACT

As the other major college entrance test, ACT used to stand for American College Testing but is now officially known by its abbreviation. The ACT covers four subject categories: English, math, reading and science. There is also a writing section that is optional although some schools may require it as part of their admissions process.

A perfect score on the ACT is a 36 and the average is 21. Like the SAT, students can retest if they aren't satisfied with their original score.

## AP

Advanced Placement tests are also offered by the College Board and may result in college credit. To take the test, students must enroll in AP courses at their high school. These classes provide college-level content. In the spring, students take an exam in their course subject matter. Scores range from 1, meaning no recommendation, to an extremely well-qualified score of 5.

Each college and university has its own policy regarding what scores suffice as college credit. Currently, more than 35 AP tests are offered.

## SAT Subject Tests

Yet another College Board offering, the SAT Subject Tests offer examinations in 20 subject areas. Although the tests may be required by some colleges and universities, many students take the tests to demonstrate competency in a particular subject and to help them stand out during the admissions process. Some institutions may use the tests for placement or even grant college credit to high-scoring students.

The SAT Subject Tests may be a good alternative for students who don't have access to AP classes at their high school.

## College Placement Exams

Finally, some schools administer their own placement exams. For example, at Peirce College, students take placement exams in math and English. The exams don't affect enrollment decisions, but are used to place students in the right freshman classes. In addition, the school may use the exam to identify which students may need access to additional support services. Other colleges may have different testing requirements that could be used for admissions or placement purposes.

### Coming Soon: A New SAT

A redesigned SAT will debut in spring 2016.

Changes include:

- An optional essay (currently required)
- A non-calculator math section
- Elimination of penalties for wrong answers
- New 400-1600 point scoring scale

## Which Tests Should You Take?

All students should take either the SAT or the ACT, and any students take both. Colleges and universities generally accept either test.

If you only want to take one test, consider these factors when making your decision:

- The SAT has a reputation for focusing on vocabulary
- The ACT has a reputation for asking more straight-forward questions
- The SAT does not have a dedicated science section
- The ACT is be required by some states

The importance of exams rests largely on the school. Highly-selective institutions may place a significant emphasis on test scores. Other schools, such as those with open enrollment, may only use the tests to make placement decisions.

“Tests are certainly important, but they are not the end all, be all of the process.”

**Kristen E. Capezza,**  
*Director of Undergraduate  
Admissions*

Some colleges and universities are moving away from tests all together. Known as “test optional” or “test flexible,” these schools may let students decide whether to submit test scores along with their application. Instead, the admissions decision will rest on high school grades and an academic portfolio.

However, not all students may be able to submit test optional applications. Homeschooled and international students in particular may be required to take standardized tests and submit their scores.

Students who plan to take the ACT, SAT or other college placement tests may want to follow these guidelines:

- Enroll in a test-prep class
- Utilize tutoring or similar opportunities if needed
- Avoid cramming the night before
- Arrive at the test site early
- Move through the test at an even pace – skip difficult questions and circle back to those
- If questions are skipped, be sure to skip the appropriate row on the answer sheet
- Make educated guesses rather than leaving questions blank

## Additional Resources

**SAT:** For more information on the SAT, visit the College Board’s website. It contains practice problems, testing dates and scoring information.

**ACT:** The ACT student page includes more than simply test information. Visitors will also find sections on college and career planning, financial aid and more.

**AP:** The AP website offers more information on Advanced Placement testing and scoring. There is also a special section for parents.

**SAT Subject Tests:** To learn more about the SAT Subject Tests, visit this page. It contains information on the various tests, why students should take a test, practice problems and more.



## STEP 4: WHEN TO APPLY

After a student has settled on their short list of schools deserving an application and taken their standardized tests, it is time to apply.

Generally, schools may accept applications in one or more of the following ways:

**Early Decision:** An early decision application is due during the fall of a student's senior year. The option should only be used if a student is certain they plan to attend a particular university, and each individual may only submit one early decision application. If accepted, the student is required to enroll unless financial aid falls short.

**Early Action:** Similar to early decision applications, these are sent in during the fall of a student's senior year. An early action application signifies a school is a top choice, but it does not obligate a student to enroll if admitted. Multiple early action applications may be made.

**Regular:** For everyone else, regular applications are generally due in the spring. Check with the institution for specific dates, which may range from January to March.

**Rolling:** Finally, some schools accept applications at any time. This option is known as rolling enrollment. Schools in this category may have a priority enrollment date, but students who miss it can still apply later.

"With rolling admissions, we are able to review applications at any time. Generally, students will receive an admissions decision within two weeks of submitting all application materials."

**Kaitlyn Zerbe**

*Assistant Director of Admissions*

Some students like the idea of waiting a year after high school before applying to college. Known as a gap year, individuals may use this time to study abroad, volunteer or work and save money to pay for tuition.

Many college admissions experts discourage gap years since it can cause a student to lose momentum. They may forget some of what they have learned in high school or their gap year may turn into two or three and result in them never attending college.

However, students taking a gap year should still apply for college while seniors in high school. Then, after acceptance, they can defer admittance for a year. To receive a deferral, students should send a letter to the college admissions office in the spring or summer after their senior year. The letter should include a compelling reason as to why the student plans to take a gap year.

### Additional Resources

**Advice on Early Decisions:** This column from a former admissions officer provides advice for students deciding whether to submit a binding early decision application. The column is part of The New York Times college section, The Choice, which contains other useful information for prospective students and their families.

**Rolling Admissions Resource:** Peterson's provides plenty of additional information on rolling admissions – from their advantages and disadvantages to how financial aid works with late admissions. Students can also find a list of institutions with rolling admissions.

**7 Questions to Ask Before Taking a Gap Year:** U.S. News and World Report provides additional information regarding gap years. The page covers topics such as deferment, financial aid and ideas for how to spend the year.

## STEP 5: COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

When it comes to actually completing the application, students will find most have multiple parts. Schools commonly request some or all of the following:

- **Application form:** The application form typically asks for demographic information as well as information about extracurricular and volunteer activities. Students can also list honors and awards they have won as well as their employment history.
- **High school transcript:** An official transcript is sent from the high school to the college or university. With early decision and early action applications, a mid-year report may be required to ensure students are maintaining grades throughout their senior year.
- **Test scores:** SAT and ACT exam scores are sent directly from the testing company to designated schools.
- **Letters of recommendation:** Generally, teachers provide letters of recommendations although some schools may also accept them from employers or other individuals who have supervised a student. The letters should be sent directly from the individual writer to the school.
- **Essay:** College essays typically revolve around themes such as overcoming adversity, personal accomplishments or future goals.

The application form may be school specific or the institution may use the Common Application. Created in 1975, the Common Application is now accepted by more than 500 public and private schools. The application allows students to complete one application online and have it sent to any of the participating schools.

There is also a Universal College Application which operates similarly to the Common Application. However, this program only has 43 member colleges.

Some majors may have additional requirements than those listed above. Most notably, fine arts majors may need to submit a portfolio or schedule an audition before admittance to a program. Other schools may request that students visit the campus for an admissions interview.

When it comes time to submit an application, the essay often gives students the most anxiety. A great essay can propel an average application to admittance while a poor one may have admissions officers thinking twice about a student's prospects.

Here are some guidelines for writing a great essay:

- Look for a creative angle that will make the essay unique and memorable
- Make sure the essay has an introduction and conclusion
- Be concise—don't bore the admissions officer and make sure every part of the essay is relevant
- Keep it real but avoid coming across as arrogant or belligerent
- Ask for feedback from family, friends, teachers and especially from family members or friends who have recently completed the college application process

### Additional Resources

**Common Application:** The Common Application website is where students can create an account and complete an application. Families can also find a list of all participating schools as well as learn more about the history of the application.

**Universal College Application:** Forty-three schools accept the Universal College Application. Students can visit this website to view the schools and complete their application.

**College Application Wizard:** This website tracks deadlines and helps students organize their application materials. As of this writing, the wizard lets students track applications for up to five colleges for free. There is an option to track additional schools for a fee.

## STEP 6: APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

Getting into college is only half the battle. Students also need to be able to afford their education.

Fortunately, there are a number of financial aid programs available from both public and private sources. These include the following options:

- **Scholarships:** Colleges and universities often provide merit-based scholarship programs. In addition, scholarships are available from private sources such as foundations and associations.
- **Grants:** Most common grants programs are offered by the federal government and include the Pell Grant and the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant. Both are awarded based on financial need and do not require repayment.
- **Loans:** Student loan programs include the following options: Perkins, Stafford, Plus and private. The first three options are provided by the federal government and come with benefits such as lower interest rates and favorable repayment terms. However, for those not eligible for these federal programs, banks and other financial institutions may offer private loans.
- **Work Study:** Most work study programs are funded by federal dollars. Students approved for a work study have the opportunity to apply for certain campus jobs.

“Don't be scared by the price tag of a particular school. Some of the most expensive colleges offer the best financial aid packages, often making them even more affordable than state schools.”

**Daniella da Silva,**  
*Director of College Counseling,*  
*Beaver Country Day School*

To receive financial aid, all students should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, otherwise known as the FAFSA.

The FAFSA is the form used to determine eligibility for federal grants and loans. Even students who don't plan on using federal aid should complete the form since it can also be used to determine eligibility for school and state financial aid programs.

Although the deadline for the FAFSA isn't until June 30th of each year, some states may have earlier deadlines for their programs. In addition, many loan and grant programs have a limited amount of funds so students should apply early to ensure they have access to the maximum amount of aid possible.

In addition to the FAFSA, some schools will have separate financial aid forms to complete. Check with a college's financial aid office for specifics on their program requirements.

## Additional Resources

**Financial Aid Guide:** The financial aid section of Affordable Colleges Online provides everything families need to know about what financial aid is available, how to apply and what goes into award decisions. There are also videos and links to other resources.

**FAFSA:** The FAFSA can be completed online at this website. Users can start their FAFSA, update an application and designate which schools receive their form.

**Federal Student Aid:** The official government website for student aid provides comprehensive information on all aspects of planning for college and paying tuition. Student loan recipients can manage their loans through this site as well.

## STEP 7: THE DECISION

Finally! All the applications are in, and the waiting game begins.

Students should receive responses to early decision and early action applications by January. If an early decision application has been accepted, the student will need to contact any other schools that have already received applications and rescind those.

Otherwise, decision letters should begin arriving by March for all other applications. Since students have probably applied to schools from both their safety and likely lists they should have several acceptance letters from which to make their final selection.

“If they do their homework right, students should land at a school that gives them experience they’ve dreamed of and set them up for career success at the end of their four – or more – years.”

**Marie DeMego,**  
*Vice President, ConnectEDU*

To help with their decision, students may want to do the following:

- Create a spreadsheet that includes the financial aid package from each school and its final cost of attendance.
- Arrange for follow-up visits to college campuses.
- Speak to alumni for more information on their college experience.
- Try to talk to one or more professors from your major department to get a feel for their accessibility and teaching philosophy.
- Consider a college’s retention and graduation rates.

By May 1, students should notify their school of choice of their plan to enroll. As a courtesy, notifications should be sent to other schools informing them of the decision not to enroll there. Don’t forget to thank anyone who helped during the process, especially those who wrote letters of recommendation.

At that point, the college or university will provide information on housing and course selections and may arrange for students to meet with an academic advisor.

## THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER

Many students find community college the right choice after high school. Classrooms and class sizes tend to be smaller, and familiar faces blanket the hallways if the institution lies close to home. Economically, tuition and fees run less than at four-year schools, making it the more affordable option. Yet community or junior colleges have their academic limits. They offer associate degrees, certificates and numerous career credentials, but very few have the ability to confer bachelor’s degrees or higher.

For a current or future community college student interested in advanced study, this means transfer -- taking your AA degree or credits earned to a four-year college or university. It sounds pretty straightforward, but making this move requires critical research and careful planning. In addition to jumping through the admissions hoops mentioned earlier in this guide, if you have visions of transferring, do each of the following as soon as possible:

1. **Befriend your academic advisor.** OK, befriend may be a strong word, but if you're looking to transfer to a university, visit your community college advisor early and often. Advisors know all the ins and outs of the transfer process, including which courses to take, which ones to avoid, and who to talk to at your target universities as D-Day approaches. They can also help you identify potential financial aid or scholarship opportunities to reduce out-of-pocket expenses.
2. **Take classes that transfer.** Academic advisors help with this, of course, but having a list of accepted courses in hand can bring you peace of mind when you register. To facilitate the process, many public community colleges and universities within the same state have articulation agreements in place. These documents outline the exact courses that transfer from the former to the latter. But if no agreement exists between your community college and one of your target universities, reach out to that university's academic advisor. He or she can provide a list of individual courses the university will accept from accredited two-year schools.
3. **Take classes that matter.** After obtaining a list of transferrable courses, find out which ones matter in the long run. For example, which courses at your community college would apply to each target university's general educational requirements? Which ones would apply to the major you plan to select? The last thing you want to do is take a class (or classes) that fail to contribute to your end goal.
4. **Know the schedule.** Each university has strict deadlines when it comes to submitting paperwork, test scores and other materials. And if you're applying to multiple universities (which you should be), managing all the dates can be challenging. Something as simple as a spreadsheet with university names, dates and required materials could be a lifesaver.
5. **Keep your options open.** Everyone has a favorite. That one university with just the right program, or that encapsulates the perfect college experience socially and geographically. However, a solid GPA, good test scores and well-penned letters of recommendation don't guarantee acceptance of your transfer request. Make sure the classes you take during your stay at community college have multiple universities in mind.

## Additional Resources

**Transfer: An Indispensable Part of the Community College Mission**, by Christopher M. Mullin.

**The Transfer Handbook**, by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

## MORE ADVICE FROM COLLEGE ADMISSIONS EXPERTS

Parents and students can benefit by setting simple boundaries - for example, no college talk at dinner - to eliminate pressure and help prevent the battle fatigue that students suffer from having to constantly chatter about their college process.

**-Daniella da Silva**

To find the best fit, students should start by listing out their priorities - such as location, size and the majors available - and applying to schools that excel in their top-ranked areas.

**-Marie DeMego**

Name at least five schools that interest you at 11th grade and visit those schools, visit their websites and learn their requirements.

**-Rita Toliver-Roberts**

Academics and involvement in extracurricular activities during high school could both play a significant role in being admitted, depending on the selectiveness or competitiveness of each institution.

**-Frederick E. Suttles**

There are great schools out there that aren't necessarily top ten schools.

**-Kristen E. Capezza**

We advise that students and parents should not be afraid of the sticker price of small, private colleges...private colleges have more merit scholarship money available to award students in good academic standing.

**-Kaitlyn Zerbe**

## GLOSSARY OF COLLEGE ADMISSION TERMS

**Common Application** – An application that lets students apply to more than one school at a time using the same form.

**Dual enrollment** – Arrangement that allows students to receive college credit while still in high school.

**Extracurricular activities** – Non-academic activities such as church, sports, clubs or volunteering. Schools may look for participation in extracurricular activities as an indicator of a student's self-discipline and personality.

**FAFSA** – The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, used to determine eligibility for federal financial aid as well as many state and college financial aid programs.

**Financial aid package** – Offered to students upon their acceptance, the financial aid package might include a combination of grants, scholarships and loans as well as the opportunity to participate in a work study program.

**Major** – An area of concentrated study. A student's major may determine what type of degree they earn (i.e. bachelor of arts or bachelor of science). Students must meet certain credit requirements to graduate with a particular major.

**Minor** – Another area of concentrated study, but the credit requirements are typically less rigorous than those required for a major.

**Open admissions** – Schools that accept all students who apply.

**Standardized tests** – Examinations used to determine a student's overall competence across a variety of subjects or to gauge mastery in a particular area. The SAT and ACT are the two most common standardized tests used for U.S. college admissions.

**Wait list** – Students not accepted to a school may be placed on a wait list. If other accepted students decline to enroll, those on the wait list may be given the option to attend the institution.