

Guidelines for preparing and applying for college:

Notes:

1. **Colleges will receive final grades (transcript) for all courses taken in grades 9-12.** These grades are used for determining GPA and class rank. Colleges have found that there is a strong correlation between the type of work a student does in high school and the work that will be done in college. They look for a student who has taken a challenging yet appropriate program and has done well. Declining grade trends are particularly troubling to colleges because these trends may continue into the freshman year of college.
2. **Explore college majors.** www.collegeboard.com has many helpful tools.
3. **Come to the Christian College Fair!**
4. **Factors in College Admission Decisions:**

The rank order of importance may vary from college to college and from year to year, but in general, in descending order of importance are the following components:

1. High School Academic Record	89%	(%responding “Important”)
2. Standardized Admission Tests	86%	
3. Overall GPA	85%	
4. Class Rank	68%	
5. Essays	58%	
6. Teacher Recommendations	57%	
7. Extracurricular Activities	47%	

 - The most highly selective colleges were more likely to attribute a higher level of importance to all factors in the admission decision.
 - It is important to note that high SAT scores will not make up for a poor academic record.
5. **Extracurricular Activities:** Colleges are concerned about the quality of your non-academic contributions and experiences. They want students who will keep a college campus active and interesting. The quality of commitment is more important than the number of activities. Colleges also want students who look beyond their school life and contribute to the community. They want to know your level of competence and interest in an activity whether it is athletics, the arts, community service, or an after school job. Such commitment also reveals a great deal about your personal qualities, values, and strengths.

Standardized Tests

PSAT

Take the PSAT in the fall of junior year. The PSAT is an indicator of how you might do on the SAT. Mary Willink gives the PSAT at GPCS. This test is the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

SAT

Students need to sign up and take the SAT on their own. A list of test dates can be found in Mrs. Willink's room. Test dates can also be found on the web at www.collegeboard.com. Most students sign up for the first SAT test in the spring of the junior year. You can take the SAT more than once. Colleges will take the highest scores for each section. When registering for the test, please input the **School Code for GPCS: 200-812**. This will ensure your test results will be sent to the school. Test results are added to your transcript.

ACT

The ACT Assessment tests students in four major areas: English, Math, Reading and Science. It is accepted in many colleges in place of the SAT. It is best to take the ACT in the spring of your junior year. Registration information is available at www.act.org.

To prepare for testing:

- There are SAT Prep Courses available in your communities.
- The College Board offers "Official SAT Online Course".
- Books
- Tutors
- www.satpreparationcenter.com.

Remember- Standardized tests do not measure motivation, creativity, artistic skills, kindness, decency, sense of humor and other human qualities that colleges take into account when admitting students.

Testing Information to Remember:

1. Use exactly the same name each time you sign up for a test.
2. GPCS School Code is 200812- use it on all forms and applications for identification purposes.
3. Each time you register you can send 4 free reports to colleges that interest you. It is recommended that you have your test scores sent after the last time you take the test so all reports will be sent.
4. Deadlines- You **MUST** have the registration postmarked by the regular deadline or you will have to pay a late fee. Registration online provides immediate confirmation of registration and test center site.

College Visits:

Many families benefit from visiting colleges that their students are interested in attending. Spring break of the junior year is a great time to visit colleges. GPCS is recommending this year to take advantage of the time off school in November the 6th – 11th. Trips at this time would cause the least disruption for you, your student, teachers, etc. Take advantage of colleges scheduling open houses or overnight programs.

Finding colleges:

- Christian College Fair
- www.collegeboard.com
- Word of mouth- GPCS families with graduates
- Consider 4-year, 2 year, vocational, military.

Choosing colleges to visit:

Size: Many students value the interactions with faculty, whereas other students prefer anonymity. The term “small college” refers to colleges with about 1500-2000 students.

Location: Consider whether you want to be close to home, in an urban or rural environment, or a climate that allows you to pursue throughout the year recreational and athletic activities that are important to you.

Type of Curriculum: Do you want a broad, general education that a liberal arts and science program provides or a more specialized program such as engineering, business, nursing, or education, which can be found at a university? Does the college or university have flexibility in regard to courses or the option to change majors or divisions? Are there language requirements or distribution requirements? Are there opportunities for internships, undergraduate research, cooperative education programs or international study programs?

Student Body, Student Life: What is the percentage of undergraduates compared to graduate students? What is the ethnic and geographic diversity? Are support services available? What voice does the student body have in school affairs? What are the opportunities for study abroad? What athletic and extracurricular activities are available? What is the focus of the social life? Do most students remain on campus on weekends or seek their social life elsewhere? What housing and dining options are available?

Calendar: Does the college or university operate on a semester or trimester program? Does it have a short winter or spring term? How do the various calendars meet your family and employment needs?

Admission Requirements: What tests are required? Is an interview required or expected? What are the application options? Are essays required? Are teacher recommendations required? What are the deadlines for applications and housing?

Visiting a college is easy. Make a list of those you are interested in visiting. Call their admissions office and make an appointment. Go! Take a notebook and a camera. Make notes about the college immediately after visiting. Lists likes and dislikes. This will help you in remembering particulars if you are visiting several colleges.

Things you should do on a college visit:

- Take a tour. Usually a student is giving a tour. Ask them about their experience at the college. Why did they choose the college?
- Sit in on a class or two in the major you are interested in.
- Talk to someone about financial aid/ scholarships.
- If you are interested in playing sports, music- set up a time to talk to coaches, directors, and/or team members.
- Check out a dorm room.
- Eat in the cafeteria.
- Interviews
- Consider having your student spend the night in the dorm.

Interviews:

Questions to consider asking at interviews:

Academics:

- What is the education philosophy of the college?
- What is distinctive about the education here?
- How many students in a typical freshman class?
- What is the quality of student and faculty relationships?
- Who teaches freshman? How easy is it to register for the classes I want?
- 2 year school- Do you have any arrangements with a 4-year school that accepts all credits?

Students:

- What region do the majority of students come from?
- What do students like most about the college?
- What were the political, social, or academic issues that concerned students last year?
- What different kinds of people are there on campus?

Social Life:

- What percentage of students leave campus on weekends?
- What activities are strongly supported?
- What were the social or cultural highlights last year?
- What are the dominant social groups on campus?
- What are the worship opportunities? Bible studies?

Campus Facilities:

- Does the college provide housing for all 4 years?
- What kind of dining facilities exist on campus? Meal plans?
- Security policies?
- Library- how big, sharing resources with other libraries?

Get the interviewer's name and follow up with a thank you note.

Questions you might be asked at an interview:

High School:

- What courses have you enjoyed the most?
- What kind of student have you been?
- Have you worked up to your potential?
- What extracurricular activity has been the most satisfying to you?
- How do you spend a typical day after school?
- How did you spend last summer?
- How would you describe your community?

College:

- Why do you want to go to college?
- What do you hope to accomplish in the next 4 years?
- What do you want from an education?
- Why have you chosen this college to investigate?
- What do you expect to be doing 7 years from now?

You and the World Around You:

- What 3 books would you take to a desert island?
- What magazines do you read regularly?
- Do you have any contemporary heroes?
- Tell me about your family?
- By whom have you been influenced?
- What are your talents?
- What do you think sets you apart as an individual in your school?
- What is the most difficult situation you've had to face?
- What political or social issue are you interested in?

APPLY TO COLLEGES:

It is recommended to apply to at least 3 colleges. Filling out applications should begin in the summer after junior year. There is a fee associated with applying. You should include one or two colleges to which your chances for admission are quite safe. It is wise to include a financial safety school as well- one you're sure you can afford if financial aid does not turn out as you had hoped. Some colleges have essays as part of their admission process. It is recommended to write these over the summer after your junior year. Have a few of your teachers proofread the essays for you. Colleges sometimes request referrals. It is helpful to teachers to get these requests early- like the spring of your junior year.

Applications can be submitted by mail or email. Begin submitting applications in the fall of your senior year. Check deadlines of the colleges you are interested in.

Sometimes the application fee is waived by submitting the application at the time of a college visit.

FAFSA: (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

Apply for FAFSA beginning in January of your senior year. This will take cooperation with your parent's federal and state taxes. This needs to be done each year of attending college. The information is shared with the college(s) you list. Colleges use the information and put together a financial aid package (if you are accepted).

Financial Aid items you might see in an aid package:

Guaranteed Student Loan
Scholarship
Work Study
Grants

Scholarships:

Look for scholarships

- On line: www.collegeboard.com is one place
- Parent's place of employment.
- Mrs. Willink's room
- Community Organizations
- Your place of employment

Suggested Schedule:

Junior Year

- ➔ Begin exploring majors and colleges.
- ➔ Attend the Christian College Fair.
- ➔ PSAT in the fall.
- ➔ Prepare for the SAT over the winter.
- ➔ SAT in the spring.
- ➔ College visits over spring break.

- ➔ Filling out applications and writing essays over the summer.
- ➔ Ask teachers for recommendations.
- ➔ Look for scholarships.

Senior Year

- ➔ SAT in the fall (October) if you are retaking.
- ➔ Attend the Christian College Fair.
- ➔ College visits November 6-11.
- ➔ Submitting college applications- October (watch deadlines)
- ➔ Submit scholarship applications-Fall- Feb./March (watch deadlines)
- ➔ Complete FAFSA forms- January (watch deadlines)
- ➔ Make final college choice- April/May.
- ➔ Graduate!

Help with transition: *(provided by Mrs. Mary Jane Stone)*

Students:

Look at yourself: examine strengths, hindrances, weakness, passions, skills, talents, abilities, grades, life responsibilities.

Workstyle, team work or alone, detail or not, on time or late, competition, confidence, activities, sports, music, drama, other items, health, organization, time management

What needs to be improved NOW?

Look at Careers:

4 year college, 2 year college, vocational school, military, on the job training, work plus courses, nursing, special training, other

Many students change career ideas in college.

Look at Colleges:

Size of college, size of town, near or far away, weather, city or rural, Christian, secular, mixed, social considerations. Does it match your interests, hobbies, and personality?

Information:

Catalogs, visit campus if possible, talk to present students, read book, web sites. Ask professionals in your interest area where they trained and for suggestions.

Watch dates when applications, financial statements, need to be returned. Especially do not be late on financial aid forms. Ask questions, especially of students now attending the colleges you are interested in.

Parents:

Looking at your student, what do you see? Strengths, academic, social, health issues, life responsibility, time management, money management, weaknesses, social skills

What skills does he or she need before college?

Looking at careers:

4 year college, 2 year college, vocational, military, on the job training, nursing, work plus courses, special training

Do you think his/her present career plans fit your student/?

Why or why not? Have you discussed the reasons, or what needs to be learned now with your student?

Looking at colleges:

Size of college, size of town, near or far away, city or rural, Christian, secular, or mixed, social considerations, weather

Does the present college possibilities fit your student realistically? Grades, competition, interests, other reasons- Why or why not?

Information:

Catalogs, visit campus if possible- be realistic, web sites. Watch dates when applications, financial statements, etc. need to be returned. Especially do not be late on financial aid forms! Ask questions. Be involved (but it is the student who is going to college).

If your student is a senior now, you have nine months to get her/him ready for all the changes and responsibilities of college. (True even if they live at home.) Might this be the year to give training in money, time management, and adult responsibility?

Student/ Parent to think about together:

Plan with your senior to loosen ties this last year. Three big adjustments at college: time, money, and responsibility.

Suggestions:

Money- apply for a credit card, savings and checking account in their name, clothing allowance, getting a job, saving first, keeping credit card use under control- pay it all every month if possible.

Time- learn laundry, iron shirt (yes boys too), buttons, know how to get enough sleep, get themselves up in the morning, shop for clothes, etc. Relax or eliminate curfew. Can they handle this, or does it need to be relaxed little by little?

Responsibility- use of a car, peer pressure, excessive partying

Remember- in 9 months your senior will be a freshman. Parents, you have that long to finish preparing them for all the hurdles and choices coming up. This is true even if they live at home and commute to college.

Are they ready as you can get them, to handle all this?

Websites:

www.collegeboard.com-

- Register for SAT
- SAT practice tests
- College search
- Scholarship search
- Financial Aid calculator

www.act.org

- Register for ACT
- ACT practice tests
- College Search

www.fairtest.org

- List of schools that do not heavily rely on SAT or ACT for admission

www.studentaid.ed.gov

- Financial aid information from the US Dept. of Education
- “Funding Your Education” Booklet

www.princetonreview.com

- College search
- Career quiz
- College major finder

www.famemaine.com

- Paying for college
- Scholarship search
- College aid calculator

www.fsfsa.ed.gov

- Federal financial aid

www.finaid.org

- Scholarship search