

# **LIFE BEYOND RB**

**A USERS GUIDE TO CAREER AND COLLEGE PLANNING**



**RIVERSIDE BROOKFIELD  
HIGH SCHOOL**

**CLASSES OF 2010 / 2011**

# STATEMENT OF STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS

*Revised July 2003*

An outgrowth of the Statement of Principles of Good Practice, the Students' Rights Statement makes clear to entering college students those "rights" which are only alluded to by the Principles of Good Practice. It also spells out the responsibilities students have in the admission process.

## I. WHEN YOU APPLY TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU HAVE RIGHTS

### **A. Before You Apply:**

1. You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial costs, aid opportunities, practices and packaging policies, and housing policies. If you consider applying under an early admission plan, you have the right to complete information from the college about its process and policies.

### **B. When You Are Offered Admission:**

1. You have the right to wait to respond to an offer of admission and/or financial aid until May 1.
2. Colleges that request commitments to offers of admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1, must clearly offer you the opportunity to request (in writing) an extension until May 1. They must grant you this extension and your request may not jeopardize your status for admission and/or financial aid.
3. Candidates admitted under Early Decision programs are a recognized exception to the May 1 deadline.

### **C. If You Are Placed on A Wait List or Alternate List:**

1. The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait list, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing.
2. Colleges may require neither a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition of remaining on a wait list.
3. Colleges are expected to notify you of the resolution of your wait list status by August 1 at the latest.

## II. WHEN YOU APPLY TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES

### **A. Before You Apply:**

1. You have a responsibility to research and understand the policies and procedures of each college

or university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure that you understand the policies of each college or university regarding deposits that you may be required to make before you enroll.

### **B. As You Apply:**

1. You must complete all material that is required for application, and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.
2. You should seek the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application period. Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.
3. It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.

### **C. After You Receive Your Admission Decisions:**

1. You must notify each college or university that accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college that you wish to attend, but no later than May 1. It is understood that May 1 will be the postmark date.
2. You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one college or university. The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a college or university and are later admitted to that institution. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify a college or university at which you previously indicated your intention to enroll.
3. If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and universities and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.

If you think that your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the president of the state or regional affiliate of the National Association for College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to: NACAC, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2818.

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## **FOREWORD**

Experts agree that most people need some form of higher education or training after high school to achieve success in the working world. This can be obtained in many ways. Some occupations demand a college education, whereas others require types of training which can be obtained in less than the four years traditionally spent earning a bachelor's degree. Many occupations which we see today did not even exist one or two decades ago and, therefore, require retraining or additional education. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the level of one's education correlates strongly with income.

Your transition from high school to a career is a very personal journey, determined in large measure by your abilities, your preferences and your hopes for the future. No one can chart this course for you, but there is a wealth of information available to help you make wise choices. You also have the support of your family, friends, counselor and teachers to help you on your way.

The counselors at Riverside Brookfield High School are available to assist you with the college and career planning process. We will be as helpful as possible as you make this important transition. Ultimately, however, the final decision rests with you and your parents or guardian. We hope that this booklet will help to clear up any questions that you may have and make the process easier. Please keep it in a place where you can refer to it often as you plan for your "life beyond RB"!

## COLLEGE AND CAREER PLANNING LINKS

You can access college and career information online. Just follow the steps below:

- ⇒ Go to [www.rbhs208.org](http://www.rbhs208.org)
- ⇒ Click on **Departments**
- ⇒ Click on **Student Services**
- ⇒ Click on **college and career information**
- ⇒ Click on the link of your choice

### GENERAL INFORMATION SITES

 <p>The most comprehensive college information site includes College Board tests, programs, online registration, and a searchable database of colleges, financial aid information, and more.</p>	 <p>A free online college search service, with profiles of 37,000+ colleges and universities, virtual tours of selected schools, electronic information and career planning tools.</p>
 <p>Provides separate databases for four-year colleges and also for community and technical colleges and takes you to the actual websites of the colleges. The four-year college database is searchable by geography, tuition, enrollment, and potential college major.</p>	 <p>Listed are thousands of academic programs in more than 100 countries throughout the world with links to study abroad programs, academic courses, and internships. The programs are searchable by country, subject and language.</p>
 <p>Peterson's education center includes information about educational programs at all levels and provides searchable databases of colleges and academic programs.</p>	 <p>This extensive college and career information site includes timed tests, essay hints, an internship database, job hunting hints, career lists by salary and industry, career profiles, and more.</p>
 <p>United States Department of Education site designed to help students and their families prepare academically and financially for college.</p>	 <p>Another United States Department of Education site in partnership with the Coalition of America's Colleges and Universities.</p>
 <p>This comprehensive site gives information regarding test, textbooks, computers, financial aid and more.</p>	 <p>Courtesy of the University of Texas at Austin, this site includes links to state listings and more than 800 two-year, post-secondary institutions offering certificate programs and associate degrees.</p>
 <p>Created by the Illinois Association of College Admission Counseling for students and their families. This website features a compilation of the commonly asked questions about the admission process.</p>	 <p>This site has free downloadable SAT practice questions. It also has study tips for many of the test sections.</p>

## COLLEGE, CAREER AND FINANCIAL AID SITES

 <p>The National Survey of Student Engagement(NSSE) is designed to obtain, on an annual basis, information from scores of colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development.</p>	 <p>One-stop financial aid center, offering a comprehensive array of programs and services.</p>
 <p>This sit shows trends in the electronic version of the <b>Occupational Outlook Handbook</b>.</p>	 <p>The U.S. Department of Education’s newest and fastest way to apply for federal student aid.</p>
 <p>This database includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests associated with occupations.</p>	 <p>Students may register for scholarship information at Fastweb, one of the internet’s largest free scholarship search sites.</p>
 <p>Provides a searchable jobs database, resume posting service, online job fair information, and industry specific employment information. The college connection has internship information and employment resources for college students.</p>	 <p>This provides links to many sources of information about student financial aid. It also includes a <b>Scholarship Scam Alert</b> with important information about how to avoid them.</p>
 <p>This extensive site provides information and links to a variety of college and career planning organizations.</p>	 <p>This site to give students access to information about financial aid, career development, education planning, and consumer protection.</p>
 <p>eCampusTours.com is a revolutionary college planning web site featuring virtual college tours of over a thousand college campuses. You can view college planning information about choosing a college, student financial aid, campus life, career exploration, student loans, scholarships and more</p>	 <p>Sponsored by Sallie Mae, this online scholarship service is one of the most comprehensive sources of financial aid resources for college. Wired Scholar a provides searchable database including information about scholarships, fellowships, grants, work study, loan programs, tuition waivers, internships, competitions, and cooperative work programs.</p>
 <p>Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 get a better job, make more money, and take control of their lives.</p>	 <p>The Illinois Department of Employment Security website provides several online tools for career exploration, access to current labor market reports and other workforce and occupational information.</p>
	<p>CISCO's Education-to-Careers program was developed to provide interested individuals and educators with information on union apprenticeship programs.</p>

## BEGINNING YOUR SEARCH



Talk with your counselor! Feel free to request an appointment to discuss your college plans at any point along the way—we are here to help you. Listed below are some of the many ways you can research colleges.

- **Campus visits:** It is important to visit two or more types of schools: public/private, small/ large, urban/ rural to get a feel for what different types of schools might offer. Sign up for the RB college tours, and visit all schools that you are considering.
- **Print materials:** The College and Career Resource Center (CCRC) in Student Services maintains a library of college catalogs, view books and other materials, as well as reference books on colleges, careers, trade schools, and scholarships.
- **Representatives:** College and military reps come to RBHS regularly. College representative visitors are listed in the Student Bulletin and in Naviance. Interested students must sign up at least one day in advance and are expected to make up all missed class work.
- **The Internet:** Almost every college maintains a website with updated information about the school and often "virtual tours". You can also find links to many college, career, scholarship and financial aid sites through the Student Services Department section of the RBHS website.
- **Open houses and information sessions:** Colleges regularly schedule these on their campuses for prospective students, or in some cases, they "bring the college to you" through evening and weekend sessions, usually held at local hotels. When RBHS receives notification, we post these sessions on our bulletin board and/or on our website in the Student Services Department section.

## STUDENT'S GUIDE TO FAMILY CONNECTIONS OF NAVIANCE

All RB students are included in the Family Connections and may access their personal information by logging on. You may link to Naviance through the Student Services page or enter <http://connection.naviance.com/rbhs>.

Students must be activated and provide a unique user name and password in order to access their personal information in Naviance from any internet connected computer.

Some of the features available in Family Connections are:

**My Colleges** which compares your academic information to colleges on your list, based on past RBHS students. You can graphically compare yourself with other RB applicants to schools with at least 3 applicants in the last 2 years.

**College Search** allows you to search for colleges and universities based on a number of criteria, such as size, location, cost, major, student life, etc.

**College Match** will match you to potential college choices based on academic info and likelihood of admission.

**College Compare** compares admit rates of multiple colleges to your academic information, including GPA, ACT and SAT averages compared to this student.

**Acceptance History** will show you all of the schools to which RBHS past grads were accepted. Click on the school for their academic profiles.

# THE **5** ESSENTIAL **P**'S OF COLLEGE PLANNING

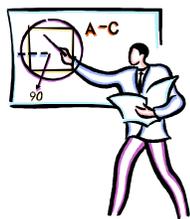
## **FIT**

Finding colleges that **FIT** you is not difficult if you break the process up into manageable parts. The framework we suggest is using the **5 P**'s: the **P**erson (That's you.), the **P**eople at the college or university, the **P**rograms, (academic and student life), the **P**lace (physical setting and characteristics of the institution), and the **P**rice your family will pay.

Take a few minutes to complete these pages and bring your book with you when you meet with your counselor to discuss college plans.



## **PERSON: WHO ARE YOU?**



Consideration of this issue is, by far, the most important of your college planning. What are your needs as a student within the classroom, and what is important to you in the world outside the classroom? Are you a strong student who learns best in a highly competitive environment, or do you prefer a more team oriented environment? Do you have special learning needs? Are you able to learn in a lecture type of class, or do you learn best with more discussion? What are your goals? Do you love sports or music? Are you an activist for social or political causes? Is your faith important to you?

### **ACADEMICS** (Please fill out to the best of your ability):

My cumulative GPA is: \_\_\_\_\_ (weighted) \_\_\_\_\_ (unweighted),

I rank \_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_ students in my class.

My highest composite ACT score is: \_\_\_\_\_.

My highest composite SAT score is: \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite high school courses: *(Circle your favorites that were designated honors or AP.)*

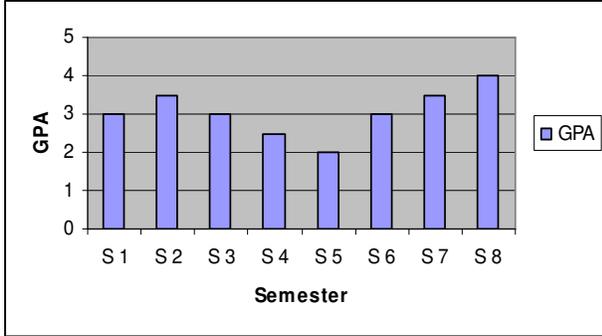
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

My least favorite classes in high school have been:

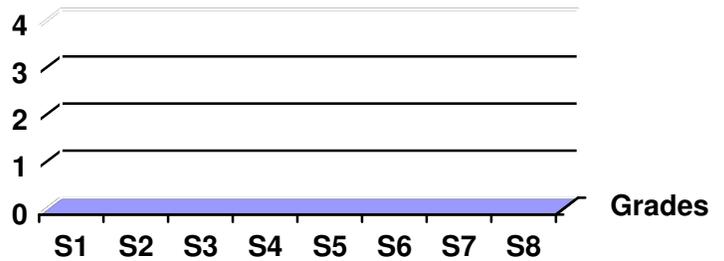
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Colleges often consider grade trends. If I were to graph my academic record in high school, it would look like this: This is based upon Cumulative GPA each year. 4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, 1 = D and 0 = F.)

**Example:**



**My grade graph:**



**PERSONAL:**

Characteristics which best describe me are: \_\_\_\_\_

Those who know me best say that I am great at: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite activities outside of the classroom are: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply to your family's college background:

- Both of my parents/ guardians graduated from college.
- One of my parents/guardians graduated from college.
- I have a sibling in college or that has graduated from college.
- I will be the first in my family to attend college.

The language spoken most in my home is \_\_\_\_\_ .



**PEOPLE: WHAT CHARACTERISTICS DO YOU LOOK FOR IN OTHERS?**

(Check all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Beliefs     | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in Sports             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in the Arts           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal Politics      | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Academic Ambition       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative Politics | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in Outdoor Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diverse Backgrounds   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Consciousness           |

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer: (Check one.)

- getting to know or work with small groups of people
- meeting lots of new people and working with larger groups



## PROGRAMS: WHAT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE?

### *Do you know what you want to major in??*

Very few high school students know for sure, so don't worry, if you haven't decided. If you do have some ideas, however, it will help to visit classes in those areas at a college of your choice so that you can get a feel for the programs in your area of interest. Just be sure to request these classroom experiences when you call to make your campus visit arrangements.



**Academic Programs** (majors) that I am considering.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 4. _____ |



### MY LEARNING STYLE



CHECK ONES THAT APPLY TO YOU

- \_\_\_\_\_ I learn new information best through "hands-on" or experiential learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I learn new information best by reading or listening to others discuss a topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am comfortable speaking in large groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer small group discussions and interactive learning environments
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to participate in honors courses in college, if available.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to have tutoring or other academic assistance available in college.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to have the opportunity to do undergraduate research.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I hope to study abroad during college.

My dream career would be:

\_\_\_\_\_.

### **I learn best when (circle the most applicable to you) ...**

- I study 5 or more subjects for an entire semester.
- Study fewer subjects for a somewhat shorter period of time (such as a quarter or trimester calendar, or a 4-1-4 or 4-4-1 calendar: see Glossary).
- Study only one or two subjects for a short, concentrated period of time.

**Student Life Programs:**

Sports, arts, service, clubs, social fraternities and sororities (Greek life) and much more contribute to the collegiate experience. Maybe you would prefer to be on the sidelines cheering on your teams, or perhaps you want to be on the field of play. If you have been active in the RB music, dance or drama programs, you may want to continue that in college. In what student life programs do you hope to participate in college? (Consider exploring new interests such as Greek life or social justice programs.)

I college I want to participate in:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



**PLACE: WHAT KIND OF ENVIRONMENT ARE YOU SEEKING FOR YOUR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY?**

(Note: Parents often have strong feelings about distance from home and the type of community in which their children go to college. If you haven't already discussed this with your parents, it would be best to do this before looking at colleges.)

Check all that apply. You may want to check more than one option on some questions.

The place where I go to college should be:

- within an hour's drive of home
- 1-2 hours by car
- 2-4 hours by car
- within a day's drive
- it doesn't matter, as long as I can get home within a few hours by plane.
- it doesn't matter at all



In what kind of community do you prefer to attend college?

- in a large city     in a small town     in the country     in a suburb
- in Illinois     in the South     in the West     in the East
- in the Midwest     in another country     doesn't matter

What physical characteristics of the area are important to you?

- in a warm climate     near the mountains     near the ocean
- near forests or lakes     near a large city     doesn't matter

The ideal size of a student body for me would be: (Check 1-2 choices)

- 1000 or less     10001-3000     3001-9000
- 9001-20,000     over 20,000     doesn't matter

The place I go to college should offer the following:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> campus housing          | <input type="checkbox"/> off-campus housing         | <input type="checkbox"/> great athletic facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fraternities/sororities | <input type="checkbox"/> concert/theatre facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> coed housing              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> single sex housing      | <input type="checkbox"/> multiple dining options    | <input type="checkbox"/> a great library           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> computer access         | <input type="checkbox"/> professional internships   | <input type="checkbox"/> research opportunities    |

Others: \_\_\_\_\_



## PRICE: WHAT WILL IT COST MY FAMILY FOR ME TO ATTEND THIS COLLEGE?

(REMEMBER THAT THE COST OF ATTENDANCE IS WHAT YOU PAY AFTER SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID, NOT THE "STICKER PRICE", IN MOST CASES.)



Check the statement which best matches your situation.

My family and I have reached an agreement about paying for my education.

**OR**

My family and I have had little or no discussion in paying for college. (If you checked this statement, please plan to have this discussion very soon!)

The importance of financial aid and/or scholarships in paying for my education is:

very important       somewhat important       not important

If necessary, I am willing to take out (low interest) student loans to help pay for college.

Yes  No

If necessary, I am willing to work part-time while I attend college to help pay my expenses.

Yes  No

Note: Need-based financial aid is based on a federal formula which is used to determine your family's ability to pay for college. To estimate your "Expected Family Contribution," go to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and complete the "financial aid estimator" section. Many colleges or other agencies also award merit aid which may or may not include financial need as a criteria for scholarships.

# THE PLAN: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER!

Now that you have considered the “5 Pieces” of college planning, it’s time to set your own **P**riorities and create your individualized plan. Look through the worksheets on the last few pages and select those priorities that are important to you. Write those in the spaces below.

## My Priorities

**P**erson

Academic

Personal

**P**eople

Academic

Personal

**P**rograms

Academic

Student Life

**P**lace

Setting

Size

Location

Now use your **P**ersonal Computer, your **P**ersonal contacts with college representatives who come to RBHS during college fairs and visits, your **P**rofessional counselor and **P**rint materials available through Student Services to find colleges that match your **P**riorities!

**REMEMBER!** Finding the right fit for you is the key to success. What is right for your best friend, your brother or your parents may not be the best choice for you. It is important to discuss the college search process with family and those that know you best! But, in the end, you will be the one who attends college. Take the time to process information carefully, and use the resources available in order to make right choices for yourself! **GOOD LUCK on beginning the next chapter of your life!**

**P**rice

Estimated EFC

Likely Merit

Scholarships

Family Support Estimate

## ADMISSION SELECTION CRITERIA

Colleges consider the criteria below when selecting students for admission.

**The transcript:** This is the most important factor considered by most colleges. Did the student take a rigorous curriculum throughout high school? (i.e. If we offer an honors or AP level in a subject, did you take it?)

- **Grade point average:** How did you do in your courses? (Some colleges recalculate the GPA based on core academic subjects: English, math, science, social studies and foreign language.)
- **Class rank:** This tells the college how you did as compared with your peers.
- **College essay:** This is your chance to “speak” directly to the college admission office and is often a critical factor in the decision.
- **Test scores:** primarily ACT and SAT (Schools usually use your highest score off of either test, and a few highly selective colleges also require the SAT II subject tests.)
- **Letters of recommendation:** From teachers, counselors and sometimes others
- **College major:** Some programs may be more competitive than others within the same university.
- **Special talents or activities:** fine and performing arts, athletics, journalism, leadership. What will you contribute to the campus community?
- **Travel experience**
- **Work/volunteer experiences**
- **Personal interview** (sometimes required)
- **Geographic, ethnic, or cultural diversity**
- Competitiveness of student's high school as compared with others
- **First generation students:** Parents did not attend college
- **Legacies:** family members who attended that college

General information about course requirements at various types of colleges can also be found in the opening section of the RB Curriculum Guide. Specific information about Illinois public universities is also provided in the curriculum guide.

The vast majority of colleges are looking for reasons to ACCEPT students, but especially at highly competitive colleges which receive many more qualified applicants than they can admit, it is often the unique qualities that an individual can contribute to the overall atmosphere of the campus that make the difference in admission.

## COLLEGE ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Colleges and universities have varying admission practices. Information pertaining to the policy of a prospective school is available in its publications. Some of the frequently mentioned practices are:

- A. Deferred Admission:** Students who have alternate plans for the year following high school may apply to colleges for deferred admission. The application process and timetable remain the same as for regular admission, but students should indicate that they do not intend to matriculate until the following year. The college usually requires an explanation of how the student plans to spend the year and the benefits the student expects to derive from it.
- B. \*Early Action (EA):** This plan allows students to indicate an institution of preference and receive a decision in the senior year well in advance of the normal response date in the spring. Students are not committed to enroll if accepted or to submit a deposit until May 1<sup>st</sup>. Some colleges allow only one EA or ED choice so it is important to read the policy of the individual college.
- C. Early Admission:** Some colleges accept exceptional students applying for entrance directly after their junior year, usually without completing the requirements for the high school diploma.
- D. \*Early Decision (ED):** Students who have demonstrated sound academic ability apply for admission to their first college choice early in their senior year. Notification of admission is given usually in December or January. Restrictive policies vary with each school and must be checked carefully to see if early decision works to the individual's advantage. You may have only one ED application pending at a time. If you apply as an Early Decision candidate, you must sign a commitment to attend if accepted and to withdraw any applications submitted to other colleges. Should a student who applies for financial aid not be offered an award that makes attendance possible, the student may decline the offer of admission and be released from the Early Decision commitment.
- E. Open Enrollment:** A term now used by an institution that publishes a set of minimal admission standards and pledges to admit any student whose credentials equal or exceed them. (Most often used by community colleges)
- F. Regular Decision:** The process whereby a college accepts applications from prospective students and delays the admission

decision until all applications from the entire applicant pool have been received and reviewed. Decision letters are mailed to applicants, all at once, traditionally in March or April. The most selective colleges mail their decision letters in early April.

- G. \*Restrictive Early Action (Also known as "Early Action/Single Choice"):** A few colleges use this plan which is exactly like the EA, except that students may not apply to other schools under any early plan.
  
- H. Rolling Admission:** As soon as an application is complete (meaning that the forms, the fee, and all required credentials have been received and processed), a decision on that application is made and the student is notified. It is generally advantageous for students to apply well in advance of the posted deadline because it is impossible to know how quickly the available spaces are being filled.
  
- I. Wait List:** The process used by selective colleges who do not initially offer or deny admission, but extend the possibility of admission to a later date (usually late May through July, but no later than August 1<sup>st</sup>). Students must accept another college's offer since waiting list acceptances are very inconsistent. Students offered a position on a wait list should be given a letter indicating a past wait list history and the availability of financial aid. Students must not be required to submit a deposit to remain on a wait list. (Discuss all wait list situations with your counselor. Second semester grades and your method of reply can be critical to your acceptance.)

\*Note: Students planning early action/early decision are often required to take SAT Subject Tests in the spring of their junior year or no later than the October test senior year.

## MYTHS ABOUT THE COLLEGE SELECTION PROCESS

Learning about colleges takes time. The beginning of the college selection process is also fraught with many myths and misconceptions. The most common myths are:

### **Myth #1 There is one perfect college for me.**

Understanding that there is no one perfect college for you but several good alternatives will make the application process more exciting. If you narrow your sights to only one college, you may spend too much time worrying about getting into that particular school. This will prevent you from making a systematic search for a variety of institutions where you would be happy. Many college search programs and reference guides list schools similar to ones you may be considering.

### **Myth #2 I need to decide on a career before I can choose a college.**

That would be nice, but the average college student changes majors two or three times in the course of four years of college and most college graduates change careers three to five times in their lifetime. Being undecided about the college major is common, especially for freshmen.

### **Myth #3 We can only afford a low priced college.**

Do not let initial cost alone determine your future. Too often students rule out some colleges because the total cost appears to be more than the family can afford. This may not be the case when all resources of financial aid are explored. Most private colleges, in order to attract students from all income levels, offer substantial financial aid, merit scholarships, and in the long run, *may* be more affordable than a less expensive public institution.

### **Myth #4 Most students get rejected by the college of their choice.**

Not so! More than 85% of all students go to their first or second choice college. Searching for a variety of colleges where your needs can be met and insuring that the colleges to which you apply include different levels of selectivity can increase your chances for acceptance.

**Myth #5 Investigating colleges is an unpleasant chore.**

Looking at colleges should be part of an exciting search for your future. Approaching the admissions process with optimism and excitement: 1) will make the experience more interesting; and 2) your positive attitude will show in your application essays and interviews. Finding the right college fit can be a fun time for self-discovery that may prove to be more beneficial than selection of a particular college.

**Myth #6 I've never heard of this college so it can't be any good.**

Most people know very little about colleges. The average well-educated individual can probably name only 100 of the 3,000 + colleges and these tend to be the older eastern colleges, the large state universities, those with outstanding athletic teams, and those that happen to be near their homes. It is important to remember that a college which might be a good match for you may be one which is unknown to you today.

**Myth #7 Since I apply to colleges in the fall of my senior year, my grades and classes that year really don't matter.**

Not so! Colleges and universities consider the senior year a critical time to get ready for the rigor of college work. The courses students select and how they do in those courses is often an important factor in the admission decision, because it correlates closely with success in college. Many colleges request a 7<sup>th</sup> semester transcript before making final admission decisions. Most college acceptances, even those made in the fall of the senior year, are contingent upon successful completion of the classes being taken at the time the transcript is sent to those colleges. Dropping classes or earning low grades in the senior year may lead to a letter in the spring or early summer rescinding the offer of admission.

**MORE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS MYTHS**

Beliefs that are not based on real facts and ideas that are held uncritically become the stuff of myths. There are many that relate to the college admissions process. Students frequently apply to the wrong institutions because they take common misinformation as a statement of truth. Listed below are some of the most common myths about the college search and selection process.

1. You have to attend an elite college or university in order to prepare for and get accepted to a major graduate school; or get a great job.

- 2.** All colleges have pretty much the same ambiance, character and values, so it doesn't matter where you attend in terms of the education you will receive.
- 3.** You hurt your chances for acceptance if you apply for financial aid to a selective college.
- 4.** You have to attend a large university to get exposure to a broad range of courses and famous professors; or, good teaching and contact with faculty only takes place in small colleges.
- 5.** Colleges and universities really don't change much over the years, so your parents' memory of "\_\_\_\_\_ University" as a good or bad school is pretty accurate, and you should decide to apply accordingly.
- 6.** The popularity of a college with students in your school or town is a sure sign of its academic strength and appropriateness for you.
- 7.** Family or friends with connections to a selective college will ensure your acceptance.
- 8.** It is unnecessary and not worth all the trouble and expense involved to visit college campuses before you decide where to apply.
- 9.** You have to apply using the early decision or action plan of a selective college to have a good or any chance of being accepted.
- 10.** College admission standards don't change much from year to year. Therefore, if your friend or older sibling was admitted, you should be able to get in with similar grades and scores.
- 11.** You have to attend a large university to find a diverse student body.
- 12.** High test scores on the SAT or ACT are the most important factor in admissions decisions. Your scores are average so you know a top college could never accept you; or, very high test scores should guarantee your admission to an elite college, even if your high school record is weak.
- 13.** Admissions committees automatically consider your best individual test scores, i.e., your highest reading score on one test and highest math on another; or, the committees average all of your scores and use the average to make their decision.
- 14.** Interviews are required by all selective colleges and can make or break your chances for acceptance.

- 15.** Admissions committees don't read all those essays and recommendations they require from applicants. You don't need to put a lot of effort and thought into your responses. They just want to make you and other applicants go through a lot of hassle.
- 16.** You have to know what you want to major in, in order to apply to college and to better your chances for acceptance.
- 17.** You are the first one in your family to apply to college and you have no connections to any school. You are certain this puts you at a disadvantage.
- 18.** The colleges that cost the most are automatically the best.
- 19.** You are a strong student but you won't qualify for any scholarships because your family earns too much.
- 20.** Once the financial aid office makes a scholarship offer to you, it won't consider offering more help after receiving information from the FAFSA or additional documentation of financial need.
- 21.** If no one from your high school has applied to or been accepted to a particular selective college in recent years, then your chances for admission are pretty low.
- 22.** Since you have become bored in your suburban high school, you need to attend the largest or urban-located university you can find to make sure you have access to an exciting campus and social life.
- 23.** If you have a learning difference or ADD/ADHD, you should not tell admissions committees about it, since this will automatically disqualify you for acceptance.
- 24.** Teacher recommendations really don't matter very much.
- 25.** It is always better to get an A grade in a regular high school course than a B in an Advanced Placement or Honors class.
- 26.** The elite, famous colleges are really for students from rich families. Therefore, less wealthy students will not fit in socially and will not find other students like themselves.

Adapted from: MAKING IT INTO A TOP COLLEGE; and, THE HIDDEN IVIES ®  
Howard R. Greene and Matthew W. Greene (New York: HarperCollins, 2000)

## FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (Baccalaureate Granting)

There are more than 2200 four-year colleges and universities in the United States in which students can earn **Bachelor of Arts (BA)** or **Bachelor of Science (BS)** degrees, these fall into two categories: **public**, which are state supported, and **private**,



which are supported through individuals, private donations, and sometimes by churches. Most of these have residential living for students. Because of the higher tuition, private colleges and universities must charge, many of these schools offer significant financial aid and scholarships, often to 80% or more of their undergraduate students.

Another way to categorize institutions of higher learning is by the types of programs they offer.

- **Liberal Arts Colleges** offer BA degrees which emphasize a core curriculum in social sciences, mathematics, English, sciences, humanities, and foreign languages and a concentration of courses, called a major in one area such as history, economics, chemistry, music, or other area. Liberal arts colleges and universities typically emphasize educating the undergraduate student, (those seeking a bachelor's degree).
- **Specialized Colleges** offer particular bachelor degree programs with emphasis on specific areas, such as fine arts or engineering.
- **Universities** are often larger than the first two types of schools and include liberal arts programs, as well as specialized colleges, such as business, education, engineering, and sometimes graduate programs in such areas as law or medicine.

## **TWO-YEAR AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

There are approximately 1700 two-year colleges in the United States, 62 of them in Illinois, alone. Some are private and may have housing, while most are public, and all of the students commute from home. The community college which serves most RB students is Triton College, and our students who attend there pay in-district tuition. RB students living in La Grange Park belong to the College of DuPage district.

### **Community College Programs:**

- Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degrees. These are generally accepted toward completion of bachelor's degrees at 4-year colleges.
- Certificate Programs allow students to complete certification in specific careers, usually in less than two years.

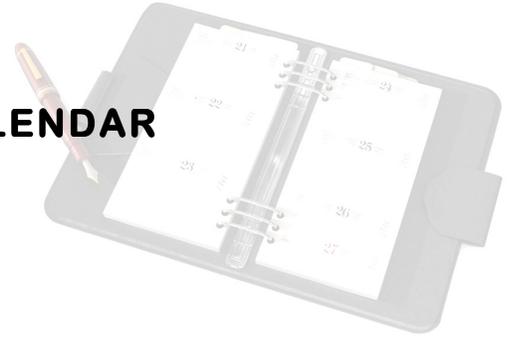
Some of the many reasons students choose community colleges include:

- Reasonable cost, usually much less than 4-year colleges
- Accessible locations, often within a short drive from one's high school
- Small classes with significant interaction with professors
- Flexible scheduling, often including evening and weekend classes which allow an opportunity to work part time while attending college
- A "fresh start" for many students who need to improve their academic standing before matriculating to 4-year institutions
- A great place to explore options and majors
- Access to honors classes which enhance one's transcript
- Excellent career programs with hands-on classes and good job placement
- An opportunity to continue living at home, while still making progress toward a college degree
- Some excellent scholarships, including the Triton Scholars Program and the Trustee Honors Scholarship at Triton

There are, however, some possible drawbacks to attending a community college after high school including:

- A lack of connection with the college community due to commuting back and forth from home/job/school
- Less likelihood that one will become involved in student life activities that are important to a job resume and personal growth
- Delayed independence and breadth that comes from living away from home and on your own
- Less time to search for internships, study abroad, leadership opportunities, and independent study with professors
- Loss of the opportunities to interact with upperclassmen on such topics as college majors, career information, and academic advice

# COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR



## Junior Year:

### Fall:

- Register for the **October PSAT**.
- Work hard throughout the year to make this your best year yet. (Colleges expect you to “have your act together” by now!)
- Sign up for an ACT/SAT prep class.
- Attend the **Future Focus College Fair** at Triton and/or the **NACAC College Fair** in Chicago.
- Attend the college essay writing workshop at RBHS.
- Meet with college representatives who visit our high school.
- Participate in activities that you hope to pursue in college.
- Attend the financial aid night in early November.

### Winter:

- Register for a strong senior year which will prepare you for the challenge of a college curriculum.
- Register to take a **spring ACT (usually in April or June)** in addition to the Prairie State ACT. Strongly consider taking an **ACT** with the **writing component**.
- Register to take the **SAT (Given in May at RBHS)**, if appropriate for your prospective schools.
- Begin to research colleges and consider your priorities.

*\*\*Note: Many colleges (especially those outside the state of Illinois) are now requiring a writing test from the ACT or SAT.*

### Spring:

- Take the **Prairie State** exam and an additional **ACT (April or June)**.
- Take an **SAT** test, if appropriate.
- Sign up to take any **SAT Subject tests** for classes that you are completing (U.S. History, Physics, etc.) if appropriate.
- Take the **AP tests** in those courses, if appropriate.
- Begin to **visit colleges** you are considering or at least similar types of schools. Your counselor can help you create a list of appropriate schools.
- **Meet with college representatives who visit RBHS** from colleges you are considering (Sign up at least a day in advance with the Student Services secretary)
- **Attend information sessions** and open houses sponsored by colleges and universities at local hotels or on campuses.
- Begin to gather information on colleges of interest.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss post-secondary plans.

- Make your plans to take summer courses (including “Camp College”), attend camps, or have enriching summer experiences. Many colleges are interested in what you do to develop yourself outside of the classroom!
- Consider lining up a summer job to help pay college expenses and lead to personal growth.
- Talk with your family about setting up **college visits** in the summer, especially for schools outside of the area.
- **Attend the college fair** at Lyons Township High School or other nearby fairs.

### **Summer:**

- **Visit colleges** you are considering and meet with admissions officers, financial aid staff, professors, coaches, activity sponsors or whomever you need to meet.
- Continue to **request information and applications from colleges** you are considering.
- **Start working on college essays and applications** so that you will be able to apply in early fall. (**Sept. 15 – Nov. 15** is the suggested time for most schools).

### **Senior Year:**

#### **Fall:**

- **Meet with your counselor in small groups in early September and then schedule an individual follow-up meeting.**
- **Attend the college essay writing workshop.**
- **Finalize your list of colleges**, usually 4-6 schools, with at least one being a fairly sure bet for admission. See your counselor for help with this and to request a letter of recommendation.
- Begin to **complete college applications**. (Note priority deadline for the University of Illinois Urbana/ Champaign, Eastern Illinois, and Illinois State University is early November.)
- Determine if you are planning to apply **Early Decision** or **Early Action** to any colleges. You may apply to only one Early Decision school, and it is a binding agreement, so only apply for Early Decision if you are willing to make that commitment!
- **Meet with college representatives who come to RB** or to the Chicago area from schools you are considering.
- Make sure that you are making your senior year count academically. You should be taking at least four academic solid courses both semesters!
- Sign up to **retake the October ACT or SAT and SAT Subject exams**, if needed for your college(s).
- **Attend the financial aid night** in early November.

- Complete and send the **CSS Financial Aid Profile**, if needed for your colleges.
- **Attend fall open house** programs or arrange individual visits to campuses.
- **Work on your application essays.** Take time with these, as they are very important. Use the essay drop-in center, if needed.
- **Request recommendations from faculty** and or counselors at least two weeks before the postmark deadline.
- Meet with your counselor to **request official transcripts** to send to all of your colleges. (see transcript release form: appendix)
- **Request official ACT or SAT scores to be sent to colleges**, if not sent previously. Remember **RB cannot send your scores to colleges. (Go to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) or [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).)**
- **Check** the posted scholarships on the student Services website **for scholarships that might apply to you.** Begin to apply for scholarships as appropriate. (Note: These are updated regularly.)
- Check with your potential colleges to see if they have scholarships for which you might be eligible.
- Attend Future Focus College Fair at Triton or NACAC Fair in Chicago.

#### **Winter:**

- **Complete your applications and essays** no later than early December. (Remember that no new applications will be processed during the winter break. Any transcripts or recommendations that need to be sent during that time must be received in Student Services no later than ten days prior to winter break.)
- Continue to **research scholarships** and complete those applications.
- **Attend the FAFSA completion workshop** in early February. Complete and submit your FAFSA form, if you are planning to apply for financial aid. (Note: Except in the case of merit or talent based scholarships, which may be offered at the time of admission. Financial aid packages are put together only for admitted students who have sent the FAFSA report to designated colleges.)
- **Request 7<sup>th</sup> semester transcripts (also called Mid-Year Reports** if needed by your colleges.
- Return to visit any colleges you are still considering. If possible, spend a night on campus; attend a class and any activities in which you are interested.
- **Keep your counselor informed** of offers of admission, denial, and deferments to regular admission, wait-list status and scholarships that have been offered to you.
- **Submit refundable housing deposit** (not enrollment deposits) to colleges that request these, so long as they do not consider these a commitment to attend.

### **Spring:**

- Once you have heard from all colleges, go back to visit those that you are still considering, if at all possible. Spend the night on campus and attend a class and social/athletic event. Discuss your options with your parents and counselor.
- **Compare financial aid and scholarship awards** and determine which schools best meet your needs financially, as well as academically and socially.
- Continue to research and **apply for scholarships**. (Be sure to monitor the “**Local Scholarships**” section of the Student Services website. The local scholarship deadline is usually the third week of April.)
- **Make your final decision and notify all colleges** to which you have been accepted no later than **May 1<sup>st</sup>**. Failure to do this may result in your offer of admission being rescinded.
- **Complete housing forms**, if you have not already done so.
- **Take advanced placement and CLEP tests**, if appropriate.
- Make your summer plans to: attend college orientation sessions, register for fall classes, get a summer job, and participate in other enrichment activities.

*Enjoy the last part of your senior year knowing that you did everything that you could to make wise choices along the way and are ready to move to the next phase of your life!*

## STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION AND ADMISSION PROCESS

Once you have narrowed your field of potential colleges to between 4 and 6, it is time to apply. You should be sure that you have on your list at least one “**safety school**” at which admission is fairly certain and which you would be willing to attend if you are admitted to none of your other choices. (In these competitive times, many students find that getting admitted to “reach schools” is more difficult than in earlier years.)

Other considerations include:

- **Appropriate level of challenge:** Review your criteria in the first section of this book. Does your list of schools reflect academic criteria similar to yours in terms of test scores and grade point averages? Have you included one or more “reach” schools on your list?
- **Finances:** Is there at least one school on your list that your family can definitely afford? (You may want to complete a “financial aid estimator” available on the College Board website.)
- **Test Requirements:** Have you taken all of the necessary tests for the colleges to which you plan to apply?

**There is no need to apply to any colleges before September of your senior year.** This will allow you time for even the earliest admission deadlines. A good rule of thumb is to try to **have all of your applications completed by Thanksgiving and any essays completed by winter break.** *(Note: Some of our public universities in Illinois, University of California system universities and many other institutions have priority filing deadlines early in November or December. Applications mailed after those dates will be considered only on a space-available basis. Early Decision and Early Action applications are also generally due in early November.)*

**If you know that you will need recommendations** for any of your applications, you should **request them at least two weeks** before they need to be postmarked. You must return the “Senior Recommendation Questionnaire” to your counselor so that he or she can write a more comprehensive letter on your behalf.

### **OBTAINING THE APPLICATION:**

- Apply on line. Almost all institutions have on line applications and many will waive your application fee, if you apply electronically.
- Check with your counselor to see if we have applications on file for the colleges and universities you are considering.
- Contact the college or university directly to request an application.
- Consider using the Common Application, if available.

## **COMPLETING THE APPLICATION**

- Neatness counts. We strongly suggest that you photocopy the blank application first and then transfer the information to the original. Type or print the application carefully in black or blue ink.
- Take time to write your best essay for each school. This is often the way schools differentiate between similar candidates for admission. Give yourself time to do your best job.
- If you use an on-line application, remember that you will need to notify your counselor that you have applied and request to have a transcript sent to each school to which you are applying.
- Determine if your schools require a "Secondary School Report" (sometimes called a "Counselor Report"). Bring it to your counselor along with your Transcript Release Authorization. (See the Appendix.) Our RB Registrar will send your transcript along with any reports you have requested.

## **COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

It is your responsibility to know the requirements for each college application and to make sure that the components are sent by the deadlines. Check each college to which you are applying to confirm if the following components are needed:

- **The Transcript:** Needed by all colleges for admission. *(Note: Your official transcripts may only be sent outside of our school with written permission from you and a parent/ guardian. We must have a "Transcript Release Authorization" for each transcript that we send on your behalf*
- **The Application:** Most colleges prefer an electronic application instead of a paper application. Many private colleges and universities and a few public ones accept the Common Application or the Universal Application. If using one of these applications, be sure to see if the schools also need an institutional supplement.
- **Official Test Scores:** Most colleges and universities require students to send scores from an ACT or SAT Reasoning test. We are unable to include your test scores on your transcript. You may have requested that the testing company send these official scores when you completed your registration to take the tests. If not, you need to contact ACT or the College Board directly to send your best scores. (Websites: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) or [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).)
- **Essay or Personal Statement:** This is often a key part of the application and is the first impression many colleges have of you.
- **Secondary School Report or Counselor Report:** Some colleges

ask for additional information to be sent with your transcript. This is completed by the counselor or RB Registrar. Be sure to confirm if this is needed with each application.

- **Letters of Recommendation:** Be sure to ask your teachers or counselors at least two weeks prior to when these need to be sent. Counselors will send them directly to the school you designate along with your transcript.
- **Application Fee:** This usually ranges from \$25-\$75. You may pay on- line with a credit card or send a check along with your application or transcript.
- **A Resume:** Some schools ask for a list of your extracurricular activities, honors and accomplishments. It would be useful to put a resume together, even if your colleges don't require them.

**When you have completed your applications and requested all of your recommendations, make an appointment to go over these with your counselor.** Bring the signed Transcript Release Authorization to your counselor along with your completed applications, secondary school reports, essays, and any additional components. We will mail our school profile and your complete application file to the college for you, so that the entire packet goes together. If you prefer to send the application under separate cover or have already sent your application on-line, it is imperative that you let us know that we need to send the school report and transcript!

Confirm that you have previously sent you highest ACT or SAT scores to the colleges to which you are applying. If you have not, you must complete an Additional Score Report form available online at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) and [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). You will need to pay for each score report that you send to each college using this form.

## THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Why Write a College Essay?

- Many colleges require the essay as a way to get to know "YOU," not just your academic record and extra-curricular activities.
- It gives you a chance to talk directly to the admission office: to explain any "holes" in your record and to let them know why they should want you on their campus.
- It's a way to separate you from "the pack" of similar students.
- It may be a deciding factor in a marginal admission.

What to Write?

- Tell your story. Be 17, not 47! Colleges want to know what interests you; they do not expect you to have had a full career prior to high

school graduation.

- Answer the question asked, in the requested format. If you use one essay for multiple schools, make sure that it isn't so generic that it's apparent that you wrote it for another college. (Note: One exception to this rule is the Common Application in which one essay can be used for any of approximately 350 Common Application schools. Many of these colleges will also require a short supplement with an additional essay. (See [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) for more information.)
- "A college essay is an autobiographical statement, not an autobiography." (Kaplan: A Parent's Guide to College Admission, 1997) Avoid writing a "laundry list" of all of your achievements. Instead focus on one or two experiences that highlight your qualities.
- If you're having trouble thinking of topics, ask your friends and family for examples of stories about you that exemplify your characteristics.
- Don't be modest. Don't exaggerate. Do be your "best self."
- Mention something in your essay that shows that you know about the college you are considering.

#### Mechanics of the Essay:

- Write it in the first person.
- Focus: Grab their attention at the beginning and let them know where you are going. Tell your story.
- Organize your thoughts before you write: brainstorm, organize, write, edit and rejoice.
- Immediacy: Don't tell them that you're determined; show them!
- Big words do not necessarily equal best words. (Okay: "At times people have pointed out that I am not always the most fastidious person in the world." Better: "I'm a slob.")
- Proofread. Proofread. Proofread! Then have someone else look it over for mistakes that you may have missed.

### **AFTER YOU APPLY**

Note the date on which you sent your applications. You should follow up with the college if you do not hear from them within the time frame they suggest. Depending on the type of admission plan they use, this could be anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. **All colleges will let you know of their decision no later than April 15**, unless you are put on a "wait-list" (See Glossary).

If you haven't already visited the campus, it is important that you make an appointment to tour the school and speak with admission representatives, financial aid officers, coaches, professors and others who may play an important role in your college experiences.

## **ONCE YOU ARE ADMITTED**

Once you have heard from colleges, go back to visit those to which you were admitted. If possible, spend a night in a residence hall and attend a class. Compare your financial aid packages (See section on financial aid.); talk with your family, your friends, your teachers and your counselor. Then make the decision that is right for you, **no later than May 1. Send your enrollment deposit and letter of intent to attend to only one college on or before that date.** Deposits postmarked after May 1 may result in the admission offer being rescinded. Tell all other colleges to which you were accepted that you will not be accepting their offer of admission. (See Appendix letter.)

## **HOUSING**

To be assured of campus housing, you may also need to send a housing deposit with your application. If colleges request early housing deposits without final acceptance, they are generally refundable until May 1, if you decide to attend another school. If you have not yet sent your housing deposit at the time you accept the offer of admission, you should send it along with your acceptance. Since policies vary somewhat on this issue, it is wise to speak directly to the admission office about their housing policies.

## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF A CAMPUS VISIT

Selecting a college requires careful planning and evaluation of information. Visiting campuses is a very important part of this process. It is said that one picture is better than a thousand words; to observe something with your own eyes is better than a thousand pictures. Visiting a college campus provides that “look” which makes the institution have a personality all its own.

**The following suggestions may be helpful as you plan your college visits:**

- **Make an appointment** the admissions office for an appointment with an admissions counselor. Request a campus tour and an appointment with a faculty member in your major field of study.
  - Addresses and phone numbers can be obtained in Student Services or on the Internet.
  - Visit campus during a time when classes are in session, if possible.
- **Research the college** before your visit. Student Services maintains a library of college reference materials, and almost all schools have a wealth of information on their websites.
- **Prepare a list** of your courses, grades, test scores, honors, awards, and extracurricular activities to use as a reference during your visit. You may request an unofficial transcript from your counselor to take with you. Discuss this information with the admission office representative.
- **Attend a class**, if possible, in the academic field in which you plan to major.
- If you are interested in a specific field, ask to **meet with a student studying this major or a professor** who can talk with you about that area of studies and potential careers.
- **Take a campus tour** – look especially at:
  - Residence halls, especially those where freshmen live
  - Dining rooms and food service (eat there, if possible)
  - Library
  - Student Center
  - Laboratories
  - Recreational and athletic facilities
  - Campus appearance
- **Pick up a school newspaper** as a means to finding out about current issues. Check the bulletin boards/ campus kiosks for clues on issues and activities.
- **Ask questions** of the admissions representative, students, or faculty.

You will discover that each campus has unique features – no two campuses are completely alike. The task is then to evaluate the data collected and your impressions from your visits and select the college which best suits your needs. Make notes while the visit is still fresh in your mind. (See chart in Appendix.)

## MORE HELPFUL HINTS FOR CAMPUS TOURS

On most campuses the tour guide is a student selected by the college for his or her ability to project an acceptable image of the institution to the prospective candidate. Some are a bit short on candor, and somewhat hesitant to contradict the catalogue or admissions officer. Others are very honest and open about their experiences.

### **Some questions you might ask your campus guide:**

1. What's the largest class you've had here? The smallest?
2. Who teaches your classes? (Graduate assistants or professors?)
3. Is there a required core curriculum? How restrictive/flexible is it?
4. How adequate is the library? Are you able to get the books you need when you want them?
5. When do you declare your major? What are the most popular majors?
6. Tell me about housing. Are some dorms much better than others? Do many students live off campus? May I see a freshman dorm?
7. How available are computers? Do you need your own computer? Is Internet access available from dorm rooms?
8. How competitive is the student body? Do students seem to work primarily for grades? What is the attitude toward working hard?
9. Have you been in any faculty homes since you have been here? How available are your professors?
10. What is your experience with the (English, History,...) departments?
11. What is the biggest issue on campus right now?
12. Are students active in national and international politics?
13. What percentage of students study abroad at some time? Where?
14. What impact do fraternities / sororities have here? Athletics?
15. What happens here on weekends? Do many students leave campus on the weekend? Does the weekend start here on Thursday or Friday? If I'm not in the Greek system, will I have a social life?
16. How active is student government?
17. Are the arts supported here? Which areas are strong?
18. If you could change things on campus, what would be different?
19. What do you like best about your experience and education here?
20. Is this a diverse community? Where do students come from?
21. What type of student fits best on this campus?
22. Why did you choose this school? To what others did you apply?
23. Do you feel safe on this campus? In the neighborhood near campus?
24. Have you or your friends participated in internships? If so, where?

### **Other Suggestions:**

1. Attend a campus athletic or cultural event.
2. Check out the campus bulletin boards and pick up a campus newspaper.
3. Find a professor and get his/her perspective.
4. Meet a coach if you are interested in a sport.
5. Meet the head of an activity/interest you want to pursue in college.

# COLLEGE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

## **Schedule in Advance**

Arrange your interview with the college admissions office at least three or four weeks in advance (allow more time during the busy fall season) by letter, email, or telephone. Request any special visits to classes, coaches, sponsors, etc.

## **No Parents**

Remember that the college is interested in interviewing you, the prospective student, not your parents. While it is encouraged for your parents to accompany you to the admissions office and even to greet the admissions representative or ask a pressing question or two, it is not wise for them to linger unless they are specifically invited to do so by the college official. Colleges are looking for independent adults among their campus communities, so consider this your time to demonstrate your independence.

## **Be Prompt and Friendly**

Arrive for your appointment on time or perhaps a few minutes early. Greet the receptionist warmly and let him/ her know that you have an appointment. Be nice to everyone you meet.

## **Dress Appropriately**

Dress suitably for the occasion. Wear neat appropriate clothes and comfortable walking shoes, if you will be touring the campus. Jeans and t-shirts are discouraged (especially those with other college logos.)

## **Control Nerves**

Expect some nervousness or tension on your part; this is only normal. But do keep the interview in perspective as just one aspect of your application to the college. Maintain your sense of humor and appreciate the fact that the college official may be equally anxious in his or her desire to impress you!

## **Watch Eye Contact and Posture**

Remember that your nonverbal messages, especially during the first minutes and closing minutes of the interview, may have an overriding effect on the picture of you that is retained by the interviewer. A warm, firm handshake, good eye contact, reasonably erect posture, appropriate courtesy, and responsiveness in facial expression will all do much to convey a positive interest.

**Read up on the College/University (Prior to the interview)**

Be sure to look over recent information about the college. Avoid asking questions that could be easily answered by a careful review of the college literature, guide books or website. Referring to something you found important about the school will demonstrate your interest.

**Speak Up!**

Don't rely on the interviewer to do all of the talking; it is important and indeed, your responsibility to contribute to the conversation. Yes/no answers with no elaboration will yield a very frustrated interviewer.

**Talk About Your Record**

Be prepared to discuss your academic and extracurricular record quite specifically. If your record has previously been sent to the college, it is possible that your interviewer will inquire very little about courses, grades and activities; instead, he or she will use the interview to explore new ground. Do not be apologetic about opportunities you have not pursued. Focus on what you have accomplished and how these experiences have helped shape your values and goals. If your record is not what you would like, take this opportunity to share important insights about challenges you might have faced and how you have grown, and learned from these experiences. Don't blame others for your poor record.

**Ask Questions**

Feel free to ask questions about any aspect of the college that may interest or even puzzle you. Social regulations, dormitory life, strength of various majors, athletic policies, internships and research opportunities and the like are all fair game.

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Alumni from the Chicago area are often recruited to interview prospective students and then report to the Admission Offices. Sometimes, colleges require interviews, and they are conducted by Admission Office staff. This is an opportunity for the Admission Office to get an idea of who you are, as well as for you to learn about the college. While many students are nervous about these interviews, colleges generally train interviewers to help you relax and enjoy the opportunity. The questions below are ones you are likely to be asked in your interview, so that you can show them just how interesting you are and get the most from your interview. Read through these and think about your answers prior to your interview.

- Why do you want to attend X University?
- What have you most enjoyed about high school in and out of the classroom?
- What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time when you were challenged in high school and what you did to resolve the issue?
- What do you hope to do in the future?
- What is your favorite book? Movie? Author? Why?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- Why do you think you would be a good fit at this college?
- As a college which prides itself on our diverse population, how will you contribute to our diversity? (Think of diversity broadly: i.e. geographic, ethnicity, cultural experiences, talents, gender orientation, economic groups, etc.)
- If you could talk directly with the admissions committee, what would like to say to them?

### **\*Topics to Avoid During an Interview\***

Because you don't know the background and attitudes of your interviewer, it is best to stay clear of these topics, if at all possible.

- Religious views
- Politics
- Your experiences with alcohol, drugs or other illegal activity
- Your affiliation with any very radical or conservative groups

(Adapted from: Get Into Any College by Gen S. Tanabe and Kelly Y. Tanabe)

## **THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE ADVICE TO JUNIORS FROM RECENT RBHS ALUMNI**

- It is harder to raise your GPA in the junior year than you think it will be.
- Start looking at colleges in the spring; start your essays over the summer.
- Make sure that colleges offer a good environment for you.
- If you are applying “early action” or “early decision”, be careful about deadlines for everything, and be sure you and your parents understand these admission plans. You, your parents, and your counselor will need to sign a contract for some restrictive early plans. (See the Glossary.)
- Ask about campus issues/negatives when you visit colleges.
- Campus visits can help you narrow your list down.
- Like your back-up schools – you may need them. Don't just pick a school because your friends/ boyfriend like it.
- Don't get hooked on just one school – you might not get in there.
- Your ideas about what you want will change over time.
- Don't obsess over the college process – you still need to do well in school. Senior year counts.
- Don't just focus on school – apply to colleges with activities that you love.
- Find out if your colleges require the CSS Profile and file it in the fall of the senior year.
- Think about getting a job while in high school. Save your money.
- Start forming good relationships with teachers and counselors now so you have people you can ask to write recommendations for you.
- Ask your teachers early to write letters for you so they have time.
- If you want to submit artwork with your applications, talk to your art teachers now about what you will need to do. Start preparing for auditions.
- Look at some applications now to learn what they ask. (They are on college

websites.)

- Take the SAT and ACT several times. Most schools will take your highest scores.
- Do well on the PSAT ACT – maybe it will be your best ACT.
- Use the Common Application. It cuts down on how many applications you have to complete and saves you a lot of time.
- Send an essay or a personal statement, even if it's not required, and especially if you aren't sure you'll be admitted.
- Save a strong writing sample from junior year.
- Apply to a couple rolling admission or Early Action schools. You need to know that you are in somewhere before April.
- Get your housing forms in as early as possible. Most schools will give you a refund on housing, if you decide to go to another school. Housing and enrollment deposits are two different things. **(Note: Different colleges have different rules about deposits. Read carefully! You may send more than one housing deposit, but one only enrollment deposit!)**
- Prioritize your tasks and stay organized. It takes time to fill out applications, write essays, complete scholarship and financial aid forms...and stay on top of tough senior courses. Do as much as possible ahead of time.
- Use the resources in Student Services, your counselor and the Internet to research schools.

## FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

You can access financial aid and scholarship information through the RBHS website. While we maintain a file of scholarship applications in Student Services, many scholarship applications are available on-line. Just follow these steps:

- Go to [www.rbhs208.org](http://www.rbhs208.org)
- Click on “**Departments**”
- Click on **Student Services**
- Click on the appropriate scholarship link (Local Scholarships, General)

### **Financial Aid Process**

Most financial aid is based on need and is administered through the financial aid office of individual colleges. Therefore, a student’s best interests are served by contacting a financial aid officer at each school to which a student is applying. The financial aid process can be time-consuming, but students who are diligent and apply early usually receive satisfactory aid packages.

*\*\*Note: The original scholarship is often awarded at the time of admission. Additional Financial aid may be awarded after he FAFSA is received.*

Students who are in need of financial aid usually are awarded a combination “package” made up of the following:

- 1.** A monetary award, grant, or scholarship which is given to the student and does not have to be repaid. An award may be for one year only or may be renewable if academic requirements are met.
- 2.** A loan; which the student must repay after he leaves college. Most student loan programs allow lengthy repayment periods and low interest rates.
- 3.** Part-time employment, possibly related to a student’s field of study. Campus jobs are convenient and often flexible with the student’s class schedule.

### **Sources of Financial Aid**

#### **Institutional Funds**

Most colleges have their own scholarships or grants as well as loan and work programs funded from endowments and operational budgets. These are often, but not always offered at the time of admission. Except for Early Decision or athletic scholarship offers, students may wait to accept a scholarship offered by a college or university on or before May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Federal Programs**

Please note that financial aid programs as sponsored by the federal government may be changed or eliminated through legislation from year to year.

Three major federal programs are campus-based, that is, directly administered by colleges. Nearly all colleges participate in these programs.

### **1. College Work Study Program (CWSP)**

The College Work-Study Program provides jobs for students with demonstrated need. Colleges may also administer other federal programs, including ones to assist students who enter nursing and other health programs.

### **2. Guaranteed Student Loan Program (GSL)**

This federally sponsored program is an important source of loan funds. These loans are made primarily by banks, savings and loan associations, and credit unions, but some colleges are also lenders. Loans are based on demonstrated need. Federally subsidized loans include the **Perkins Loans** and the **Stafford Loans**.

### **3. Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)**

The federally sponsored Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students allows parents of students to borrow money to help with their children's college costs. (Note: PLUS loans charge lower interest than most bank loans.)

## **State Funds**

All states have scholarships or grant programs to help students attend their college of choice. The regulations and application procedures for these programs vary from state to state. Ask your counselor for information about Illinois' program or check Internet resources to contact ISAC, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. (See the "College Zone" link through the Student Services web site.)

## **Local Funds**

Financial aid is also provided by community agencies, foundations, corporations, unions, religious organizations, and clubs, as well as civic, cultural, and fraternal groups. Need is usually considered, but other factors may be taken into account in determining a student's eligibility. Check with your counselor for information on local aid sources. Parents should contact a human resource office for employer-sponsored scholarships.

## FINANCIAL AID FACTS



- \$ Financial Aid is given to students whose family contribution cannot cover the total cost of the chosen institution and who apply for aid.
- \$ The amount that the total family can contribute is determined by filing a Free Application for Student Federal Aid form, or FAFSA, as soon as possible after January 1 of the student’s senior year. (Note: RBHS hosts a FAFSA workshop each February.)
- \$ The amount of financial need is dependent on the parent and student income, assets and expenses such as other college tuitions. It does not necessarily reflect the student’s academic or athletic ability, or his leadership, music, artistic endeavors.
- \$ Filing the FAFSA form automatically allows the student to apply for all the possible loans and grants that federal and state agencies offer.
- \$ All schools require the FAFSA to apply for financial aid. Some colleges also require the students to file an additional aid form called the CSS Financial Aid Profile. There is a fee for the Profile (\$23 for one school; \$16 for each additional school). Fee waivers may be available, for students with significant financial need. Some schools require an institutional financial aid form used only by their school to access all aid available from that school.
- \$ Students who complete the FAFSA online, rather than using the paper version generally receive their EFC (See below.) within 72 hours, as opposed to 4-5 weeks. In order to apply online, the student and a parent must both have a PIN number. To access the FAFSA on the web and obtain PIN numbers, go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).
- \$ The Expected Family Contribution, EFC, is the amount determined by the FAFSA that the family can contribute to the college costs and remains the same amount regardless of the cost of the college. The Unmet Need is the deficit left when the college subtracts the family’s ability to pay from the college’s total cost (room, board, tuition, books, fees, travel, miscellaneous).

College X Total Cost	\$10,000	College Y Total Cost	\$20,000	College Z Total Cost	\$30,000
Exp. Family Contribution	\$10,000	Exp. Family Contribution	\$10,000	Exp. Family Contribution	\$10,000
Unmet Need =	\$0	Unmet Need =	\$10,000	Unmet Need =	\$20,000

- Ⓢ Each college will attempt to package the needed amount in a combination of Grant (gift money), Loan (could be a federal government loan, a college loan, and/or a bank loan) and Work Study (a campus job).
- Ⓢ Scholarships are monies awarded due to talents or excellence, not need, but will be calculated into a financial aid package. Scholarships usually reduce the loan portion of the total package, but sometimes reduce a grant awarded.

**\*\* A college will not calculate your financial aid package unless the student has been offered admission. \*\***

**\*\* Never let a college's cost deter you from applying. Most higher cost colleges have more grant money to use as part of the package. You will not know the true cost of attending that school until you receive the financial aid package. \*\***

**\*\* Wait until you receive a financial aid package from ALL the schools to which you have been admitted before you make your decision to attend a college, if financial considerations are important to you. You have until May 1 to respond unless you applied Early Decision, although you may need to request an extension until that date to accept a scholarship or admission offer. \*\***

**\*\* Estimate the federal Expected Family Contribution for your situation using formulas available on the Internet. An EFC estimator is available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). For an EFC estimator that includes Illinois state grant eligibility use [www.collegezone.com](http://www.collegezone.com). Remember that those schools requesting additional forms and additional information may conclude a different family "Need" and EFC than the federal formula – sometimes more, sometimes less. \*\* Use *your tax records to help you estimate an EFC.***



# Scholarship Scams

**Need Money for College? Doesn't everybody? Unfortunately, in their efforts to pay the bills, many students and their families are falling prey to scholarship scams.**

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The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) cautions students to look for tell tale lines:

"The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."

"You can't get this information anywhere else."

"I just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship."

"We'll do all the work."

"The scholarship will cost some money."

"You've been selected by a 'national foundation' to receive a scholarship" or

"You're a finalist" in a contest you never entered.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), unscrupulous companies guarantee or promise scholarships, grants or fantastic financial aid packages. Many use high-pressure sales pitches at seminars where you're required to pay immediately or risk losing out on the "opportunity."

If you attend a seminar on financial aid or scholarships, follow these steps:

- Take your time. Don't be rushed into paying at the seminar. Avoid high-pressure sales pitches that require you to buy now or risk losing out on the opportunity. Solid opportunities are not sold through nerve-racking tactics.
- Investigate the organization you're considering paying for help. Talk to a guidance counselor or financial aid advisor before spending your money. You may be able to get the same help for free.
- Be wary of "success stories" or testimonials of extraordinary success – the seminar operation may have paid "shills" to give glowing stories. Instead, ask for a list of at least three local families who've use the services in the last year. Ask each if they're satisfied with the

products and services received.

- Be cautious about purchasing from seminar representatives who are reluctant to answer questions or who give evasive answers to your questions. Legitimate business people are more than willing to give you information about their service.
- Ask how much money is charged for the service, the services that will be performed and the company's refund policy. Get this information in writing. Keep in mind that you may never recoup the money you give to an unscrupulous operator, despite stated refund policies.

The FTC says many legitimate companies advertise that they can get students access to lists of scholarships in exchange for an advance fee. Other legitimate services charge an advance fee to compare a student's profile with a database of scholarship opportunities and provide a list of awards for which a student may qualify. And, there are scholarship search engines on the World Wide Web; many of them are free. The difference: Legitimate companies **never** guarantee or promise scholarships or grants.

For more information on scholarship fraud or for a complete list of free publications, contact the FTC. The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll free 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-888-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

## **ACT/ SAT/ SUBJECT TESTS/ PSAT/ PLAN/ PSAE...OH MY!**

### **What are all of these tests, and when do students take them?**

The **PLAN** and **PSAT** tests are practice tests taken in the sophomore or fall of the junior year. The PLAN is a practice test for the ACT, while the PSAT is a practice test for the SAT. The PSAT is also used as the test for National Merit Scholar qualification. We do not send these scores anywhere, but they give students an opportunity to see how they might do on the **ACT** and **SAT** college admission tests. The **PSAE** is a two-day test given to juniors in Illinois public schools each April. The first day of this test is an ACT and may be used as an official college admission test. **SAT Subject Tests** are one-hour tests required by a small number of highly selective colleges.

Colleges generally agree that the most important predictors of collegiate success are the high school curriculum and the level of achievement in that curriculum. Still, the ACT and SAT standardized scores provide an experience and measure common to all applicants and are often important factors in college admissions.

The ACT and SAT tests are different and test different skills. Because most schools accept either test, you may wish to find out about both tests and see which test best shows your strengths. The SAT is designed to predict college performance by testing critical thinking skills used in college. The ACT is designed to measure acquired skills and thereby predict college performance. Here are some other differences:

<b>The ACT...</b>	<b>The SAT...</b>
Random order of difficulty	Questions appear in order of difficulty within a set
Has no guessing penalty	Guessing penalty
Has a science reasoning test	No science test
Is 25% math (7% trigonometry; all multiple choice)	Is 50% math (arithmetic, algebra, geometry; some math not multiple choice)
Reading, grammar and language usage questions	Reading, grammar and language usage questions, but tests vocabulary much more than ACT; has sentence completion analogies
Writing test is optional, although is part of the PSAE.	Writing test is required.
Scored on a 1-36 for each subtest and composite score, which does not include writing.	Scored on a 200-800 point scale for each of three sections.
Scores are sent individually for each test date.	Scores may be sent individually or all dates may be sent together for the same cost. (starting March 2009)
Colleges usually use the highest composite score for admission purposes. A few schools will combine the highest sub-scores.	Colleges often combine the highest sub-scores from different test dates to achieve the highest composite score for admission purposes. Some schools only use the highest composite scores.

### **How do I qualify for the non-financial honor of Illinois State Scholar?**

One must take an ACT or SAT during junior year, score well, and rank in the top 20% of the class to be considered. PSAE-ACT scores may be used for Illinois State Scholar consideration, so all juniors automatically have one score on file. It is important that we have all of the scores on the ACT and SAT exams taken by the end of June of the junior year so that RBHS can complete the necessary forms required by the state of Illinois.

### **Junior Test Calendar:**

October: Sign up to take the PSAT at RBHS

Winter/ Spring: Take the SAT Reasoning Test and an ACT.

Late April: Take the Prairie State Achievement Tests

June: Consider retaking the ACT, SAT or SAT Subject Tests

### **Senior Test Calendar:**

September/ October: Retake the ACT or SAT, if appropriate.

October/ November: Take Subject Tests, if your colleges require them.

### **Why would I take both the SAT and the ACT since both are college entrance exams?**

Besides the fact that some colleges prefer one over the other – many juniors take both tests because most schools have no preference between the two tests. Students use the best score from either test to submit with their application.

### **May I apply to college without testing?**

Yes, although the college will probably withhold a judgment on your admission until the scores are received. Most colleges include test scores in their admission decisions. Always make sure you meet application deadlines and you allow plenty of time (4-5 weeks) for ACT or the College Board to send your scores. Don't wait for the scores to return to you before completing the other parts of the application, if by doing so you will miss deadlines. A few colleges and universities are making standardized tests optional as a part of the college application file. A list of these schools can be found at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org).

### **How do I register for these tests?**

PSAT: Register in Student Services in early October. There is a fee for this test.

PSAE: Juniors register in school in late winter. No additional cost for this test.

ACT/ SAT/ Subject Tests: Register for these tests given on the national test dates individually. RB offers these tests in the October and again in the spring.

Registration packets available in Student Services, or on line at: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) or [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). There is a fee for these tests, and students may send official scores to up to four colleges at no additional cost.

**The RBHS School Code is 143-655.  
RB ACT Test Center Code: 174690  
RB SAT Test Center Code: 14-520**

**ACT/ SAT/ PSAT SCORE COMPARISONS**  
**(SOURCE: THE ACT)**

**Approximate Conversions:**

<b>ALL 3 SECTIONS OF THE SAT</b>	<b>CRITICAL READING AND MATH ONLY</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>PSAT</b>
650	430	9	60
780	530	11	75
950	640	13	90
1100	740	15	105
1230	830	17	120
1350	910	19	135
1470	990	21	150
1650	1110	24	165
1770	1190	26	180
1940	1300	29	195
2060	1380	31	210
2180	1460	33	225
2390	1600	36	240

## THE STUDENT ATHLETE'S QUICK GUIDE TO COLLEGE ATHLETICS

### Are You Interested in Playing Collegiate Athletics?

If you are interested in playing athletics competitively at the collegiate level, here are some things that you can do:

- First and foremost, talk with your high school coach to assess your skill level and potential collegiate playing level (i.e. Division I, Division II, Division III, NAIA, Junior College). **Note: Only junior colleges, NCAA Div. I, II and NAIA colleges can give athletic scholarships. NCAA Div. III schools cannot.**
- Go to the athletics link on the websites of the colleges you may be interested in and fill out the potential student athlete/recruit questionnaire.
- Attend camps or clinics at the college of interest.
- Attend showcase or exposure events for your sport (see your coach for more details on some of these events).
- If you are planning on visiting a college, set up an appointment with the coach to find out more information about the program.
- If you have film of any games/matches, feel free to mail them with an athletic/academic profile sheet to potential college coaches (after discussion with your high school coach).
- If you are a potential Division I or Division II athlete, you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) at the end of your junior year or early in your senior year.
- After your junior school year is completed you can have your official transcript sent to the NCAA Eligibility Center. Information on how to do that is on their website.

### **Important Links:**

For links to the following go to

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=263> :

- 2008-09 Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete
- The NCAA Eligibility Center
- Eligibility Standards Quick Reference Sheet (includes core course and testing information, recruiting calendars, as well as the Grade Point Average/Test Score Sliding Scale for eligibility).

To View all courses from Riverside Brookfield High School approved as "Core Courses" by the NCAA Eligibility Center please go the following link:

[https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/general/index\\_general.html](https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/general/index_general.html)

Go to [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org) for NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) or [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org) for Junior College Information.

## **CAREERS**

### **What is a career?**

A career is a course; a passage; a profession for which one trains and is undertaken as a calling.

### **Why should I be interested in career search?**

Because you will have a course or passage in life whether you plan for it or not, whether you go to college or not and whether you want to think about it or not. So why not get into the driver's seat and plan your route to a career of your choice! Career planning is a process, not a finished product. Statistics show that the average person in the U.S. changes careers more than three times in a lifetime. Our career planning can change directions at different points in our life. Better planning will keep us in the direction of our choice. This will result in being happier in the jobs we have in life.

### **So how do we begin?**

You start by exploring yourself and careers that will be available to you. We have tools that can help you with this. RB sophomores completed a career interest inventory through our "Naviance" program called, "Do What You Are". Review the results from these career inventories with your counselor and parents or guardian. RB also hosts a career fair every other year and annual career field trips. Finally, consider taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). It is offered each year at RBHS and will give you information about potential career skills which may be used in the military or civilian life.

### **What else can you do?**

You can learn about careers by looking through reference books like the Occupational Outlook Handbook available in the Student Services Office or online. You can also borrow videotapes or career booklets in the Student Services Office that give you good ideas about many different careers. If you haven't already, you may also want to get a part-time job and experience the basics of finding a job, being hired and keeping a job. On the following pages you will find a list of application and interview tips, resumes and other helpful information. Once you are employed, you'll experience the many things that you must handle, such as: getting along with colleagues and bosses, dressing appropriately for work, and the importance of punctuality and attendance. Is this starting to sound like school?

### **How many different careers do you know?**

Parents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, friends are all resources for career information. Ask them what their careers are. Shadow them at work and

see if what they do may interest you. Exploring the "Occupations" database will give you a chance to learn more about some of the more than 600,000 job titles in the world of work. Any way you do it, you need to learn more about the careers that are available to you.

**If you are interested in a skilled trade, consider an apprenticeship?**

Most careers require a process of education, maybe some advanced training and then you apply for the job. In many apprenticeships the job is applied for first. You then obtain a sponsor and the sponsor sends you for training. Often the classroom training decreases as the on the job training increases. Some apprenticeships are only one or two years and some are as many as eight years. A good resource to learn about apprenticeships is the Illinois Department of Employment Security that works with trade unions in arranging training and sponsorships with employers interested in new apprentices. For an application and brochure that provides more detail contact Student Services.

There are other apprenticeships where workers begin being employed in starting positions with the company. Many trades are also bound by seniority and a form of nepotism that brings in relatives and excludes the unconnected. These types of trades can be very difficult to enter and also depend on an individual being in the right place at the right time.

**The military prides itself as a great place to start!**

High school graduates join the military every year with the intent to save money for future education or to receive training for a career. The military provides the training that allows them to fill the many jobs that are needed in the operations of a military. These people need to perform some of the same tasks that are needed to operate a city in civilian life. Therefore many of the same skills and training are the same or similar. Some skills, like an air traffic controller and a pilot, are almost identical to civilian positions. Other military positions may be quite different than civilian positions or require considerably more training to work in the equivalent position in civilian life. The military can provide career opportunities as well as training and money for further civilian training. It is important that those who look for the military for their career training should be aware of the commitment that they must make to receive these benefits. **Regardless of which branch of the Armed Forces one enters, including the National Guard and Reserves, one is subject to being called for active duty.**

**\*\*Please refer to pages 4 and 5 for useful career resources\*\***

## APPLICATIONS

Applications are required for almost all jobs. Listed below are some basic tips for completing job applications and a sample application.

- 1. PRACTICE:** Fill out the sample application at the end of this section. Make sure you understand all of the terms listed on the application.
- 2. BE PREPARED:** When you go to a company to complete an application, bring a pen with dark blue or black ink, your social security card, a list of your references, and your completed "Quick Tips" sheet.
- 3. READ THE APPLICATION CAREFULLY AND ANSWER QUESTIONS COMPLETELY:** Don't leave spaces blank.
- 4. BE NEAT:** Don't cross things out if necessary, use an erasable ink pen (no pencils).
- 5. REVIEW:** Look over your application after completing it to make sure it is complete and correct.

# YOUR PERSONAL QUICK TIPS SHEET

Complete this page and keep it in your wallet. Update it before job interviews and take it with you when applying for all jobs.

## THE APPLICATION PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## WORK EXPERIENCE

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

From Mo./Yr. \_\_\_\_\_ From Mo./Yr. \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description \_\_\_\_\_ Job Description \_\_\_\_\_

Last Salary \_\_\_\_\_ Last Salary \_\_\_\_\_

## EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

College/Post High School \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Attended \_\_\_\_\_

Degree/Training/Course work completed \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## REFERENCES

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

# RESUME TEMPLATE

**Name**

Street Address, City, State Zip Code

Phone Number Email Address

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## OBJECTIVE

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Describe your career goal or what position you would like to obtain.

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## EDUCATION

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School Name City, State Dates of Attendance

**Degree Obtained**

- Specific Accomplishments

School Name City, State Dates of Attendance

**Degree Obtained**

- Specific Accomplishments

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## WORK EXPERIENCE

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Business Name City, State Dates of Attendance

**Job Title**

- Job responsibility or achievement
- Job responsibility or achievement
- Job responsibility or achievement

Business Name City, State Dates of Attendance

**Job Title**

- Job responsibility or achievement
- Job responsibility or achievement
- Job responsibility or achievement

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## VOLUNTEERISM OR INTERESTS

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- List volunteer experience or interests related to the job
- List volunteer experience or interests related to the job
- List volunteer experience or interests related to the job

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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- List any accomplishments or awards you may have received
- List any accomplishments or awards you may have received
- List any accomplishments or awards you may have received

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## COMPUTER SKILLS

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- List any computer programs you are proficient in

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## REFERENCES

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- Available upon request or please see attached

## THE INTERVIEW

Review before each interview:

1. BE ON TIME for the interview.
2. GO ALONE. Do not bring along friends or family.
3. DRESS APPROPRIATELY for the job. Always be clean and neat.
4. SHAKE HANDS with the interviewer, if they offer their hand.
5. MAKE EYE CONTACT with the interviewer. Pay attention to what the interviewer is saying.
6. DO NOT SMOKE OR CHEW GUM during the interview; even if the interviewer does these things.
7. TALK SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY. Use Standard English, not slang.
8. SAY WHY YOU ARE THERE..."I am interested in your position as receptionist."
9. DO A LITTLE RESEARCH about the company/ organization before your interview. Go to their website, or read other literature about them. The fact that you can speak knowledgeably about your potential employer will demonstrate your interest.
10. ASK QUESTIONS about the position and what your responsibilities would be, if you get the position. Ask about the company.
11. BE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF. Refer to the questions in the interview section before you interview.
12. BE READY TO SAY WHEN YOU COULD BEGIN WORK.
13. THANK THE INTERVIEWER for their time before leaving.
14. FOLLOW - UP INTERVIEW WITH A THANK - YOU LETTER several days following the interview.

## **TOP QUESTIONS ASKED AT JOB INTERVIEWS**

1. Describe your ideal job and/or boss.
2. Why are you looking for a job? Why are you leaving your current position?
3. What unique experience or qualifications separate you from other candidates?
4. Tell me about yourself.
5. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
6. Describe some of your most important career accomplishments
7. What are your short-term/ long-term goals?
8. Describe a time when you were faced with a challenging situation and how you handled it.
9. What are your salary requirements?
10. Why are you interested in this position? Our company?
11. What would your former boss/ colleagues say about you?
12. What are the best and worst aspects of your previous job?
13. What do you know about our company?
14. What motivates you? How do you motivate others?
15. Are you willing to relocate?

## **Recruiter “Pet Peeve” Survey (Top 20 Based on Survey)**

1. Spelling Errors: Typos and poor grammar
2. Too Duty Oriented: Job description instead of accomplishments
3. Dates not included or inaccurate
4. Missing or Inaccurate Contact Info: or unprofessional email addresses
5. Poor Formatting: boxes, templates, tables, use of header/ footers, etc.
6. Functional Resumes as opposed to a writing a chronological resume
7. Long Resumes: too long
8. Long Paragraphs, instead of bullet-points
9. Unqualified Candidates: candidates who apply to positions when they don't meet the specified qualifications
10. Personal Information, not relative to the job
11. Employer Information Not Included
12. Lying/ Misleading: especially: education, dates, inflated titles
13. Objectives or Meaningless Introductions (on resumes)
14. Font Choice: poor font choice or style
15. Resumes sent in PDF. Zip files, faxed, web page resumes, mailed resumes and not sent as WORD attachment
16. Pictures, Graphics or URL Links no recruiter will call up
17. Not Easy to Follow Summary of Prior Employment or Relevant Experiences
18. Resumes in 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Person
19. Gaps in employment
20. Burying Important Info in the Resume

## **YOU GOT THE JOB!!!**

Now that you're on the road to career success, there are a few practical tips to ensure you continued success:

1. BE ON TIME.
2. DRESS APPROPRIATELY.
3. KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE.
4. BE FLEXIBLE.
5. TREAT EVERYONE WITH RESPECT AND COURTESY, INCLUDING THOSE THAT WORK UNDER YOU, AS WELL AS YOUR BOSSES AND PEERS.
6. TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR WORK.
7. DEMONSTRATE GOOD MANNERS.
8. SHOW INITIATIVE.

## GLOSSARY

**Accreditation** – This amounts to a stamp of approval by an educational or professional organization stating that the college meets the regulations determined by this group. Each region of the country has its own accrediting organization: Southern, Middle Atlantic, New England, North Central and Western.

**ACT Assessment "ACT Test"** - A group of tests administered by American College Testing and required or recommended by many colleges as part of the admission process. The tests measure educational development in English, mathematics, reading; and science reasoning, and the ACT now includes an optional writing exam. ACT exams are given at specified test centers throughout the year. This test is given to all juniors in public high schools in Illinois as a part of the Prairie State Assessment. That test does not allow for the optional writing test.

**Advanced placement** - Granting of credit and/or assignment to an advanced course on the basis of evidence that the student has mastered the equivalent of an introductory course.

**Advisor** - A member of the teaching faculty who advises students on course selections and curriculum concerns.

**Aid package** - A combination of aid (possibly including a scholarship, grant, loan, and work) determined by a college financial aid office.

**Application fee** - A fee usually charged for making application to a particular college. Sometimes it is refundable, but usually it is not.

**Associate of Arts Degree** - A degree granted by a college or university for a program that requires two years of full-time study. Community Colleges and some 4-year Colleges offer A.A. degrees.

**Baccalaureate Degree** - The Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science or any other bachelors degree granted by a college/university for a program that requires four years of full time study.

**Calendar** -

Traditional semester: Two approximately equal semesters similar to the Riverside Brookfield Calendar.

Early semester: Two semesters with the first semester being completed before Christmas.

Quarter: Three equal terms of about 12 weeks each.

Trimester: Calendar year divided into three equal semesters. Third semester replaces summer school.

4-1-4 or 4-4-1: Two equal terms of about 16 weeks each studying 4 courses, with a 4 week interim term studying one course, usually in January or May.

**Carnegie unit** - One Carnegie unit is given for successful completion of one year's study of one college preparatory or academic subject in a high school. Some colleges refer to these as "academic units." The name comes from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

**Career-oriented program** - A group of courses that prepare students primarily for employment, often in a specific occupation. Such a program which can last a few months or more than two years, may lead to a certificate, diploma, or associate degree. For instance, College of DuPage and Triton have such programs.

**Church-related college** - A private college that is financially supported and whose policies are influenced to varying degrees by a church.

**Class rank** - A student's standing based on his/her academic record as compared with that of the other members of the class. In a class of 100, the highest ranking student would be number 1 at the 99th %ile; the lowest number 100 at the 1<sup>st</sup> %ile. The class rank is frequently presented as a percentile or fraction. For instance: the top 50%, the top 10%, the bottom quarter.

**College transfer courses** - Courses intended for transfer of college credit to bachelor's degree programs elsewhere. For instance, College of DuPage and Triton have such courses.

**Cooperative work-study education** - A program in which the student alternates between full-time college study and full-time paid employment related to the area of study. Under this plan, the bachelor's degree often requires five years to complete.

**Core curriculum** - A group of courses in varied areas of the arts and sciences, designated by a college as one of the requirements for a degree.

**Consortium** - A voluntary association of two or more colleges providing joint services and academic programs to students enrolled in member ink. Students at one campus are sometimes allowed to attend courses and use the facilities at other member campuses.

**Cooperative education** - A program integrating classroom study and work experience and offering credit and salary.

**Credit by examination** - A program through which some colleges grant course credit based on results of ACT or SAT scores, CLEP, AP, or another exam developed by the college.

**Credit hour** - A unit of academic credit that often represents one hour of class time per week for a period of study (semester, quarter, etc.)

**CSS (Financial Aid) Profile** – A financial aid form used by some private colleges and universities to provide additional information beyond what is given on the FAFSA. There is a fee for this form, which may be waived, if the student has financial need. (See your counselor to obtain a fee waiver form.)

**Deferred Admission** - The practice of some colleges of allowing an accepted student to postpone enrollment for one year.

**Dual Credit** – A cooperative program in which high school students receive credit for a course taken during high school for both high school and college credit.

**Early Action** - An opportunity to learn of a college's decision on your application by an early date if the application is filed by a specified early date. Unlike early decision, early action applicant still has until May 1 to notify the college of his or her decision whether or not to accept an offer to attend the college.

**Early Action, Single Choice (Also called Restrictive Early Action)** Identical to Early Action, but his plan restricts applicants to only one early action or early decision application.

**Early admission** - Admitting students of superior ability into college courses and programs before they have completed the standard high school program.

**Early Decision plan** - A binding plan offered by some colleges in which: (1) students must withdraw their applications to all other colleges if they are notified of acceptance, and (2) students must usually apply earlier in the senior year and will be notified of their acceptance or rejection by December 15. (Students may apply to only one school under an early decision plan.)

**FAFSA or Free Application for Federal Student Aid** - The application for federal student financial aid, processed at no cost to the applicant It is used to determine a student's eligibility for federal grants, loans, and work funds. Some schools may require an additional form for which there may be a processing fee. (See the link on the Student Services web page.)

**Federal College Work-Study Program** - A government-supported financial aid program coordinated through financial aid offices whereby an eligible student (based on need) may work part time while attending class at least half time, generally in college related jobs. To apply, file a FAFSA.

**Federal PLUS** - A loan program in which parents, graduate students, and self-supporting undergraduate students can borrow from a bank or other lending institutions.

**Federal Pell Grant** - Financial assistance for post-secondary education awarded by the federal government on the basis of need. The grant may be used toward tuition, room and board, books, or other educational coast, and requires no repayment. To apply, file a FAFSA.

**Federal Perkins Loan Program** - Loans funded by the federal government and awarded by the institution. The loans feature low interest rates and are repayable over an extended period of time. To apply, file a FAFSA.

**Federal Stafford Loan Program** - A low-interest loan program administered by the federal government which may be subsidized or unsubsidized. Student may borrow from a bank, college, or other financial institution. To apply, file a FAFSA.

**Grade point average (GPA)** - An indicator of the student's overall scholastic performance, the GPA is computed by totaling the number of grade points earned in each course (generally, A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0) and then dividing by the total number of courses carried.

**Grants** - Awards based on financial need that do not require repayments. Grants are available through the federal government, state agencies, and educational institutions.

**Hope Scholarship** – A first and second year college tax credit for families below a certain adjusted gross income – claimed by filling income tax form.

**Honors program** - A program offered at some colleges to encourage superior students to engage in a more challenging program than is required. Students who succeed in meeting the requirements of an honors program are usually granted 'honor' degrees.

**Humanities** - The humanities are usually classified as fine arts, the classics, English, general and comparative literature, journalism, music, philosophy, religion and language. Many colleges divide their offerings into three divisions: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

**Independent study** - An arrangement that allows a student to earn college credit through individual study, usually planned with and supervised by a faculty adviser.

**Internships** - Short-term, supervised work experience, usually related to a student's major, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full or part-time, on or off campus, paid or unpaid.

**Liberal Arts** - A broad course of instruction comprising the arts, natural sciences, language, literature philosophy, religion, and the classics. The Latin origin of the term, sites liberates, literally means 'the arts that free' (the mind and spirit).

**MAP Grant** – The Monetary Award Program grant for Illinois residents applying to private or public Illinois Colleges. To apply file FAFSA.

**Matriculation** - The process whereby a student is accepted, pays the fees, and enrolls in classes - officially becoming a student at the college. This term is only applied to freshmen or to a transfer student's first enrollment.

**NCAA Initial-Eligibility Certification** - In order to participate in intercollegiate sports at NCAA Division I and Division II colleges, student-athletes must submit their ACT/SAT scores and academic grades to the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. To send scores to the Clearinghouse, enter 9999 as one of the school choices on the registration form.

**Needs Analysis** - The process used to evaluate an applicant's financial situation to determine how much financial aid a student would be eligible for to meet post-secondary educational expenses.

**Open admissions** - The policy of some colleges of admitting virtually all high school graduates, regardless of academic qualifications. Often only a high school diploma or GED is required for admission.

**Placement tests** - A battery of tests designed to assess a student's aptitude and level of achievement in various academic areas so that he or she may be advised to enroll in the appropriate level classes.

**PLAN** - A tenth grade assessment from American College Testing designed to help students improve their post-secondary planning and preparation. PLAN contains academic tests, an interest inventory, study skills assessment, and student information section, and is similar in content and format to the ACT Assessment.

**Priority Filing Deadline** – An early date used by some public universities by which students who submit the complete application file are given priority consideration in the admission process.

**Private college/university** - An educational institution of higher education that is not supported by public taxes. Private colleges may be independent or church-related.

**PSAT** – An eleventh grade assessment form the College Board designed to help practice for the SAT. It is also used as the qualification test for National Merit Scholars.

**Public college/university**-An educational institution of higher education that is partly supported by public taxes.

**Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)** - Air Force, Army, and Navy programs that combine military education with baccalaureate degree study, often with financial support for those students who commit themselves to future service in the Armed Forces.

**Rolling admission** - An admission procedure by which the college considers each application as soon as all required materials have been received. The college then notifies each applicant of acceptance or rejection as soon as possible, usually within 2-4 weeks.

**Rush week** - A period set aside with the approval of the college for fraternities and sororities to issue invitations to prospective members. `Delayed Rush' usually indicates this week is held during second semester.

**Scholarships** - Non-repayable financial awards to students based on special talents, merit, or merit plus need.

**SAT or Scholastic Assessment Tests** - A test of verbal and mathematical abilities given by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) throughout the year at specified test centers and required or recommended by many colleges as part of the admission process, sometimes in combination with one or more of SAT subject tests which are achievement tests from sixteen subject areas.

**Seminar** - A course in which a small group of students, headed by a professional, engage in research and discussion.

**Teaching Assistant** - (sometimes called a graduate assistant) A graduate student whose job on campus to help him/her meet his/her educational expenses is to teach, and often to grade, underclassmen.

**Transcript** - The official record of a student's academic performance from the time of entrance in a given institution to the end of the latest semester.

**Tuition** - The charge for instruction. Generally designated for a year or semester for a full-time student; for part-time students it is often designated by the credit hour of a course. Room and board and books are separate, additional costs.

**Universal Reply Data (May 1)** - Unless a student has requested Early Decision, applicants have until no later than May 1 to notify colleges of their intent to attend in the fall. Responses earlier than May 1 are welcome and are equally as binding. Beginning on May 2 your spot may be granted to someone on a waiting list, if you did notify the school of your intention to enroll. *Note: Colleges may request earlier responses to offers of admission and/or financial aid, so long as they offer students the option of requesting an extension until May 1 to respond to offers of admission or financial aid.*

**Wait List** - A term used by institutions to describe a process in which they may initially delay offering or denying admission. Rather, the institution extends to you the possibility of admission in the future. Colleges offer admission to wait list candidates if insufficient numbers of regularly admitted candidates accept their offers of admission. Students admitted to a preferred choice school may be required to make their decision to accept the offer of admission within a few days of receiving their acceptance letter and must inform the other college to which they had previously committed of the new decision. Students should not be required to submit a deposit to remain on a wait list.

## LETTER REGARDING DEFERRED OR WAIT LIST STATUS

The date

Student's address

Director of Admissions  
Name of college or university  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Director of Admissions:

I was disappointed to have been deferred under your (Early Action/Early Decision) plan and hope that in the spring you will be able to act favorably on my application. I realize that if accepted, I am no longer committed to attend; however, I want you to know that (name of college) is still my first choice, and I will attend if accepted.

(Update with new honors, activities, a graded paper, recent grades, additional recommendations, etc.)

Thank you for your continued interest and consideration on my behalf.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your full name

Your social security number

Note: The above letter can also be used for wait-list status. For either deferred or wait-list status, check with your counselor or the college advisor about including additional support documents.

## LETTER ACCEPTING/DECLINING AN OFFER OF ADMISSION

The date

Student's address

Director of Admissions  
Name of college or university  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Director of Admissions:

Thank you for accepting me to the class of (year). Although my decision was difficult, I have decided to attend (name of school).

OR

I am pleased to accept your offer of admission for next year. Please send me the necessary admissions deposit information, class registration materials, and orientation and housing information.

I appreciate the time and consideration you gave my application.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your full name

Your social security number

