

THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS/SCHOLARSHIP PROCESS

HOW A PARENT CAN HELP

The college selection and application process can be one of the most exciting, enjoyable, nerve wracking and extremely stressful times in life. If students are taking a full and challenging class load, as they should be if they are to have a successful transition to college life, the junior and senior year should find them buried under work. Add to this the stress of producing award-winning essays for both scholarships and college admissions and students may feel overwhelmed. At this point, parents can come to the rescue in a number of areas. The LRCA college director is also available to help guide parents in these areas.

1. **Get Organized!** Parents should purchase a large, transportable plastic file box (approximately \$10 at most discount office supply stores) that is designed to hold hanging file folders. This should be done by the time the student begins his or her junior year at LRCA. Students who have maintained a 6-pocket college portfolio at LRCA during the 9th & 10th grade years should now transfer their portfolio material to the sections listed below in their portable file box.
 - a. **Transcripts/Standardized Tests** – diploma plan, grades, PSAT scores, ACT & SAT scores, etc.
 - b. **Extra-Curricular Activities** – Student council, athletics, clubs, church activities, music, mission trips, community service, scouting, etc.
 - c. **Service Projects & Jobs** – Volunteer opportunities and paid opportunities
 - d. **Awards/Honors** – Academic, athletic, service, leadership, job recognition, etc.
 - e. **Pictures** – Pictures of activities related to any of the above topics: mission trips, academic banquet, UN competition, etc.
 - f. **College Related Information** – SAT/ACT test dates, essay recommendation tips, yearly task lists for college preparation, etc., **this packet of information...**
 - g. **Career Planning** – Evaluations and other such information
 - h. **Admission/Scholarship Essays** – Keep one copy here and one in the specific college file
 - i. **Financial Aid Information** – FAFSA, State Aid, etc. Keep copies here.
 - j. **Interviews/College Visit Questionnaires** – File these forms here.
 - k. **Scholarships** – Scholarship deadlines, copies of scholarship applications, etc.
 - l. **College Life** – Articles on roommate relationships, college packing lists, college life, etc.
 - m. **Activities Resume** – This will be compiled during your senior year using many of the items from areas a-e above. Print a copy from Prep HQ.
 - n. **Recommendation Letters** – Copies of the recommendation letters you are allowed to view.
 - o. **NCAA Information** – If applicable.
 - p. **Military/ROTC Information** – If applicable.

- Reserve another 7-10 folders to label for each college on your “long list.” As you begin to receive information from these colleges you can set up a file for that school. Also, as you mail in applications, housing forms, etc. make and keep copies of each in the file for that college. As you weigh each college choice, move the college files around, arranging them in order of preference at that particular time. Students should try to have their choices limited to 5 schools by the beginning of their senior year.
 - Use this file box (later) for college needs such as bank statements, budgets, names and addresses, job applications, etc.
2. **Know the Priority System for Admissions and Scholarships:** Colleges will judge your child’s application using a definite priority system. As you will see, taking a rigorous load all the way through your senior year not only prepares you for college-level courses, but also increases your chances for admission and scholarships. The normal priority system is:
 - a. Difficulty of courses taken (they consider what is offered at your school) and your grades in those courses.
 - b. Class rank or percentile (top 20%, top 10%, etc.)*
 - c. SAT or ACT scores *
 - d. Extracurricular school activities *
 - e. Community service/other activities *

* These areas are especially valuable for scholarships. Regarding extra-curricular activities, colleges are looking for students who demonstrate responsibility, leadership, and initiative in their chosen activities. It is better to stay with a few varied activities and show growth in the above mentioned areas than to “dabble” in too many things.
 3. **Talk About Colleges:** Pull out the materials on the colleges being considered and begin to talk seriously about what appeals to you and your child. Some patterns should emerge about large vs. small schools, urban vs. rural, coed vs. single sex, and public vs. private. Make certain that all colleges being considered offer degrees in all of the fields of interest to the student. Statistics show that 85% of all college students change their majors at least once.
 4. **Discuss Your Family’s Realistic Financial Commitment:** Consult books at different libraries and attend sessions on financial aid offered at college nights. From these you should be able to arrive at an approximate amount the FAFSA is going to declare as your family’s contribution (average is 5.5% of parents’ income). Financial aid can often close the gap that exists between scholarship offers and remaining college costs.
 5. **Read & Be Informed:** Read every book and review any websites (PrepHQ) you can on college admissions. The more informed you are the fewer mistakes you will make. Also consult major college guides and copy the pages you have on each school. It will be factual, unbiased and will present the same statistics and info on all schools for a better comparison.

6. **College Visits/Personal Interviews:** Visit as many colleges as possible. As you travel or when you visit relatives or friends who live near or on a college campus, stop by for a visit. Check out the campus, the dorms, the library, and the student center, and pick up a school catalogue while you're there. If you are hoping for an interview, please know that these should be scheduled a couple of weeks in advance. Please be certain to review The College Interview Form and the College Campus Visit Checklist that are included along with this form.
7. **FAFSA (www.fafsa.ed.gov):** In November, you will need to register on the website to receive your PIN number. Prepare your income tax Form 1040 as early as possible. It will be needed for the FAFSA application. Many scholarship competitions may also request a copy of your tax form even though the scholarships are based on merit rather than need. Complete the FAFSA online application in January as early as possible
8. **Essay Assistance:** Type a list of all the essay topics for admissions and scholarships so that your child can ponder these and perhaps find a way of using the same essay with some modifications for more than one school. Also, volunteer to do the typing and proofreading of essays and applications—the more eyes checking grammar, punctuation, and spelling, the better.
9. **Keep Up with Recommendations:** Make certain your child has a complete resume by the end of the junior year to give to teachers and others being asked to write recommendations. The more information on the resume the better. Remind your child to include a stamped, addressed (typed) envelope with each request for a recommendation and do not forget a thank you note when the recommendation is completed. When accepted, remind the student in the midst of the excitement to share the good news immediately with the teachers who wrote recommendations. They feel gratified in helping your child achieve his or her dreams. (use “activities” grid form for these writing recommendations)
10. **Graduation Requirements:** Make certain that your child's junior and senior year course schedules fulfill GPA diploma requirements. Make certain that they file their “Petition to Graduate” early during their senior year and that they order all necessary announcements, cap & gown, etc., for graduation. All of these should be done by the end of the fall semester of their senior year in accordance to the ordering company's deadlines.
11. **To Have a Job or Not:** Jobs often offer valuable learning lessons for students, but parents should note that it may be necessary to help your children make important choices regarding jobs and preparation for college, especially if the two conflict. It is far better to do well in school and pursue meaningful service and educational activities than to have a typical after school job. If, however, you feel a job is necessary (financial reasons, etc.), then try to use your talents and skills and create a job, if possible (e.g. Using your athletic ability to coach younger players, your academic ability to tutor, your computer skills to do word processing, graphics, or your music ability to give lessons, etc.). Showing this kind of initiative in your work experience is valuable to college admission and scholarship committees, plus it's rewarding and fun.

Suggested Guides & References: (We have a lot of helpful guides in the library.)

The Fiske Guide to the Colleges and The Insiders' Guide to the Colleges by Peterson and Lovejoy

How to Get to the College of Your Choice by Road, Plane, Train: A Practical Guide to Campus Visits by Kraus

Book of Majors by CollegeBoard (extensive information on hundreds of majors and listings of schools offering these majors. A GREAT RESOURCE!!!)

***Make copies of everything you send to colleges.**