

Class of 2008 College Planning Guide

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which though
shalt go; I will guide these with mine eye.

PSALMS 32:8



September

Begin reducing your preliminary college list. A list of 3-5 colleges is good, but you should have no more than 10. Write to admission directors to request information or visit the college web sites.

Make a list of all of your application deadlines. Put them on your calendar. Remember that you must turn apps into our office two (2) weeks prior to the postmark deadline for school reports. Consider using "Common APP" which is available on line at www.commonapp.org. Keeping a separate college calendar is recommended.

See your high school counselor to review transcripts and scores and to evaluate your college choices. A parent, student, counselor meeting will be scheduled for this purpose.

Analyze application instructions: what information is needed, what are the deadlines for admission and scholarship applications, what scores are required, are recommendations necessary, etc. Consider Early Decision or Early Action options.

The school code or CEEB code for Bethel Christian School is 192-587. This number will be used often.

Register for the ACT, SAT, or SAT subject tests if you have not taken a college entrance exam or if you wish to improve your scores (Review for exams). Writing option may be required for certain schools.

Construct or refine your resume. It should include high school academic awards, high school and extra-curricular activities, leadership positions, community service, and work experience.

Athletes who plan to participate in competitive college sports must register with NCAA Clearinghouse at ncaaclearinghouse.net. You must print a copy of the transcript release form, sign and submit to Mrs. Stevenson in the Guidance Office.

October

Many schools require at least one essay as part of the application. Usually they will assign specific topics or provide a list of suggested topics. Start developing outlines this month. Teachers, advisors, and counselors may help you in this process.

Set up college visits to those schools on your final list. Notify Guidance Office of these dates and arrangements prior to your visit. Talk to students currently enrolled there and recent graduates if possible.

Decide whom you should ask for recommendations and ask them now. Provide an outline or resume listing your academic and extracurricular activities. Tell the recommender of your plans, interest, and goals.

Research scholarship possibilities through counselor's office, colleges, library, special publications and internet sites (see list at the end of this booklet).

November

Complete essays. They should be neat attractive, grammatically correct, interesting and easy to read, AND address the assigned topic.

Request transcripts from the school counselor, giving a few days notice.

Begin submitting applications if you have not already started the process. Carefully read instructions! You should have a rough draft and then a final copy for submission. Proofread before submitting and keep copies of everything you send for your records. **Many colleges have online applications.

Be sure there is a school on your list where your admissions chances are good and where you will be happy. Don't apply to schools you do not wish to attend.

Find out which financial aid forms are required by the colleges on your list (FAFSA, PROFILE, or the college's own form) and preferred filing dates.

December

Obtain financial aid forms from counselor, colleges, or online. FAFSA cannot be filed until January.

Give your counselor, advisor, or teacher sufficient time to complete the "Secondary School Report".

Continue submitting applications for admissions and scholarships.

January and February

Work on financial aid applications as soon as you have all the necessary information. Even if your college does not require filing financial forms and you do not want federal aid, you should submit a FAFSA to be considered for a TOPS award! (Make a copy for your files.)

Continue scholarship search.

March

Some colleges use test scores for placement or credit. Check college policy regarding placement or credit for ACT, SAT, SAT subject, CLEP and AP exams. Your choice of majors may also be a factor. Consider taking or retaking tests.

If you are applying to more than one college, carefully rank your preferences by location, academic programs, and important characteristics. Does your ranking match your “gut” feeling? (Even if you are convinced that you want to attend a particular school, it is wise to have a backup plan.)

Colleges begin notification of admission and scholarship awards.

April

Most colleges have begun announcing their decisions. If you are accepted by more than one, talk over your options with family, teachers, counselors, or trusted family friends. Weigh factors that are important to you.

Carefully consider financial aid and scholarship offerings before making a final decision.

May

Notify colleges of your decision to attend or not to attend.

If you have been offered scholarships and/or financial aid awards, meet deadlines to accept or decline offers. BE FAIR to colleges and other students; you should not tie up scholarship dollars that you do not plan to accept.

Notify your counselor of final college decisions and scholarship awards. (Colleges may not send this information to the high school.) Accepted awards and scholarships will be announced at graduation.

June

Read all orientation materials and start gathering things you will need for the exciting year to come.

Voices of Experience

...advice from recent seniors

1. Don't wait until a week before your application is to be turned in to work on your essay. You'll be rushed and will probably not produce as good an essay.
2. Be absolutely sure that the college you choose offers the right environment for you, the size, program, and atmosphere that meets your needs.
3. Visit as many of the schools on your list as you can. This process really helps you narrow the list down.
4. When you visit, always ask about negatives, not just the good stuff. A smart question is, "If you could change something about this college, what would it be?"

5. LIKE YOUR BACK-UP SCHOOLS! You may need them!
6. Never pick a school just because your friends are going there.
7. Don't get hooked on just one school. You might not get in there.
8. Don't obsess about the college application process. The most important job you have your senior year is to continue to do well or even better.
9. Don't focus only on school. You will burn out. Get or stay in one activity that you really love.
10. Don't let the college admissions process dictate what activities you do. If you're doing volunteer work for your resume, you're doing it for the wrong reason.
11. Ask your teachers for recommendations early so they will have sufficient time to write them and do a good job for you.
12. Use the Common Application. Why spend so many Sunday afternoons filling in blanks?
13. If your school has a rolling application process, by all means apply as early as you can. There were people in our class who waited too late and were deferred or denied. Had they applied early, they would have been admitted.
14. If you're still not satisfied with your ACT score, take the SAT. Some students do better on this test.
15. Don't dread applying to college. It's one of the most exciting times in your life. And once you get into it, it's really not so bad. Sitting around thinking about it or dreading it only makes it worse.

College Selection Worksheet

1. Colleges you are currently considering _____

2. Possible college majors: _____

3. School size: _____ Very small (less than 1,000) _____ Large (9,000-19,900)
 _____ Small (1,000-3,999) _____ Very large (more than 20,000)
 _____ Medium (4,000-8,999)

4. Community: _____ Rural _____ Small town _____ Suburban _____ Urban

5. Location: _____ Hometown
 _____ Less than 3 hours away from home
 _____ More than 3 hours from home

6. Housing: Dorm Home
 Off-campus apartment Facilities for students with disabilities
7. Student body: All male All female Coed
 Primarily full-time students
 Primarily commuter students
 Primarily residential students
 Minority representation/diverse student population
8. Admissions: Highly selective (rank top 10%, ACT 29+, SAT 1340+)
 Selective (rank top 25%, ACT 27+, SAT 1260+)
 Traditional (rank top 50%, ACT 23-26, SAT 1070+)
 Liberal (ACT 19-24, SAT 950+)
 Open (few limitations)
9. Costs: Low Medium High
10. Support Services: Academic counseling, tutoring service
 Career placement counseling
 Personal counseling
 Student health facilities
11. Activities Clubs, organizations
 Greek life
 Athletics, intramurals
 Student publications
 Student government
 Religious organizations
 Student radio/TV
 Other
12. Athletics: Division I, II, or III
 Sports offered
 Scholarships available
13. Specialized Programs: Honors Programs
 Services for students with disabilities or special needs
14. Academics: Major offered Reputation
 Classroom facilities Libraries
 International studies Internships
 Professors rather than assistants Student faculty ratio

Making a Campus Visit

- Try to visit a college while classes are in session and students are on campus.
- The visit should include a tour and an interview with an admissions counselor.
- Prepare for your visit. Read about the college in advance, check view books, websites, etc.

- Ask questions while you are there and make notes during or immediately after to compare with other campus visits.
- Try to sit in on a class or two. Talk to students and instructors, if possible.
- Visit the student center and eat in the cafeteria or food court.
- Some colleges will arrange for you to spend a night in the dormitories. Take advantage of this opportunity.
- Sightsee in the surrounding area.
- If you are very interested after the initial visit, try to visit again before making a final decision.
- Send a thank-you note or email to the person(s) who made your arrangements and to those with whom you met.

Questions to Ask

- When visiting a college campus or talking to a college representative, be prepared to ask questions (include positive and negative). Here are a few suggestions.
- Is the campus located near a town or city?
- What size is the campus (population and physical or geographic)? Is getting across campus to classes a problem? Etc.
- What activities are available on campus? Surrounding towns?
- Is there a Greek system (if so which sororities and fraternities)? What are other organizations on campus?
- Do students stay on campus during the weekends or do they tend to go home?
- This college is best known for _____?
- Does the school have internships or job placement programs?
- What size is the typical freshman class for basic subjects?
- Do graduate assistants or professors teach most freshman and sophomore level classes?
- Do teachers and professors give students individual attention, help or tutor?
- How long does a student have to drop or add a class?
- Do credits from the college easily transfer to most other colleges?
- What kinds of dorms are there? What kinds of meal plans are available?
- What is the cost of attending (tuition, housing, meal plans, fees)?

- Does the college have special visiting or scholarship days? How do high school students schedule a visit? Can visitors attend classes, meet with financial aid, spend the night or weekend in a dorm?
- What are the admission and scholarship deadlines? What kinds of financial aid are available?

What are colleges looking for??

- A high school curriculum that challenges the student.
- Grades that represent strong effort and upward trend.
- Solid scores on standardized tests.
- Passionate involvement in a few activities, demonstrating leadership & initiative.
- Community service showing evidence of being a “contributor”.
- Work or out-of-school experience, including summer activities that illustrate responsibility, dedication and development of areas of interest.
- A well-written essay that provides insight into the student’s unique personality, values and goals.
- Letters of recommendation from teachers and guidance counselor that give evidence of integrity, special skills and positive character traits.
- Supplementary recommendations by adults who have had significant direct contact with the student.
- Anything special that makes the student stand out from the rest of the applicants.

Important: Be honest!
 Neatness counts.
 Even if an essay is optional, complete it.
 Proofread carefully.
 Keep photocopies of applications.
 Writers and artists should send a special resume or portfolio of work.

Tips from Kaplan Education Center

Information Sheet Example

<p>Your Name Here City, State</p>

ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

LEADERSHIP POSITION

National Honor Society – 2, 3, 4
Student Council – 4
Bethel Buzz (school newspaper) – 3, 4
Fellowship of Christian Athletes – 1, 2, 3, 4
Varsity Basketball – 1, 2, 3, 4
4 – H Club – 2, 3, 4
Governor’s Program on Abstinence – 2, 3, 4

President – 4
Secretary – 4
Reporter – 3

Captain – 4
Vice President – 3
Membership Director – 3

HONORS AND AWARDS

National Honor Student – 4
President’s Award – 3, 4
Literary Rally – English I – 2nd district
 English II – 3rd district
 English III – 1st district
Science Fair – 2 – 2nd local, 3rd regional
 3 – 2nd local, 1st regional

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Academic tutor – 1, 4
Vacation Bible School teacher – 1
Teacher assistant – 3, 4
Church mission trip – 3, 4
Angel Tree Sponsor (sponsor for needy family at Christmas) – 1, 2, 3, 4

The Essay

... Get it Write!

Whether students are asked to write a multiple-page argument or share a brief personal testimony, admissions personnel want students to accomplish the same four goals: answer the question, stand out, show insight, and be personal.

Answer the essay question is, obviously, the most important goal. That should be simple enough, but many students get so wrapped up in writing an interesting essay that they unintentionally stray off topic, losing sight of the most important goal: answering the question directly.

To make your essay stand apart from the rest, simply plan to take a different approach. Showing insight means demonstrating that you’re a perceptive, thoughtful person who belongs in college. Being personal means letting readers get to know you by revealing some of your personality, interest, and achievements.

*Tips from Campus Life Special
Issue October 2002*

Recipe for the College Essay

Ingredients:

- A. Sophisticated, grammatically correct writing
- B. Clear, coherent communication
- C. Passion; spirit; commitment
- D. Substantive content

- E. An answer to the question!

Instructions:

- A. Think, plan, outline before you actually start writing.
- B. Write about something you care about, know about (demonstrate passion and intellectual curiosity).
- C. Be focused and provide detail rather than choosing too broad a topic and not getting specific enough (trying to solve the problems of the world in 500 words).
- D. Proofread your essays carefully. Don't rely solely on spell check and grammar check programs.
- E. Keep in mind your audience – 23-65 year olds with diverse backgrounds.
- F. Read your essay out loud.

Frequently Asked Essay Questions

- Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you.
- Discuss an issue of local, national, or international concern that is important to you.
- What one person has had the most significant influence on your life?
- What is your greatest achievement? Why do you consider this an achievement?
- What was your most significant leadership experience?
- What do you consider your greatest failure and what did you learn from it?
- Describe an impact that a high school teacher has had on you.
- Why do you want to attend this particular college?
- How have you impacted another person's life?
- What have your fellow students learned from you?
- What book has had the biggest impact on you?

How to Get Into the Top Colleges,
2000, Prentice Hall

The Interview

Prepare yourself by:

- Learning the most likely questions
- Knowing yourself and your qualifications
- Knowing something about the school
- Formulating your own questions
- Practicing through mock interviews

During the Interview:

- Be on time – dressed neatly and conservatively.
- Greet the interviewer with a smile, extended hand, and firm handshake.

- Remain physically at ease, without fidgeting.
- Do not chew gum.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Keep your voice at a normal speed and volume; use expression.
- Be upbeat and positive; emphasize your strengths.
- Do not complain or criticize others.
- Be truthful.
- Be yourself. Do not pretend. Relax and try to enjoy the conversation.

End of Interview:

- Ask intelligent questions of the interviewer regarding academics, character of the school, campus life, issues facing the school, etc.
- If you feel that the interviewer may have gotten a negative impression during the interview, you may ask if there are issues that you could clear up before leaving.
- Do not ask the interviewer how you did at the end of the interview.
- Smile at the interviewer, shake hands, and thank him for seeing you.

Fifty Standard Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you want to do with your life?
3. Do you have any actual work experience?
4. How would you describe your ideal job?
5. Why did you choose this career?
6. When did you decide on this career?
7. What goals do you have in your career?
8. How do you plan to achieve these goals?
9. How do you evaluate success?
10. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
11. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
12. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
13. If you had to live your life over again, what would you change?
14. Would you rather work with information or with people?
15. Are you a team player?
16. What motivates you?
17. Why should I hire you?
18. Are you a goal-oriented person?
19. Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
20. What are your short-term goals?
21. What is your long-range objective?
22. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
23. Where do you want to be ten years from now?
24. Do you handle conflict well?
25. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?
26. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
27. Do you handle pressure well?
28. What is your greatest strength?
29. What is your greatest weakness?
30. If I were to ask one of your professors to describe you, what would he or she say?
31. Why did you choose to attend your college?

32. What changes would you make at your college?
33. How has your education prepared you for your career?
34. What were your favorite classes? Why?
35. Do you enjoy doing independent research?
36. Who were your favorite professors? Why?
37. Why is your GPA not higher?
38. Do you have any plans for further education?
39. How much training do you think you'll need to become a productive employee?
40. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
41. Why do you want to work in the _____ industry?
42. What do you know about our company?
43. Why are you interested in our company?
44. Do you have any location preferences?
45. How familiar are you with the community that we're located in?
46. Will you relocate in the future?
47. Are you willing to travel? How much?
48. Is money important to you?
49. How much money do you need to make to be happy?
50. What kind of salary are you looking for?

DECLINING AN OFFER OF ADMISSION

(This is always the ethical thing to do, as other students may be wait-listed and want your place!)

Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Director of Admission
Name of School
City, State, Zip

Dear Director of Admission,

Thank you very much for accepting me to the Class of 2008. Although I am uncertain at this time which college I will attend, I have decided not to accept your offer. Thank you for the time and consideration you gave to my application.

OR

Thank you for accepting me to the Class of 2008. My decision was difficult, but I have decided to attend another school.

Sincerely,

Your Name

SAMPLE RESPONSE LETTER TO EARLY DECISION OR EARLY ADMISSION DEFERRAL

Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Director of Admission
Name of School
City, State, Zip

Dear Director of Admission (or use the name on the letter you received),

I was disappointed to have been deferred under your (early action or 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 school) is still my first choice, and I will enroll if accepted. (Say this only in response to early admission.)

(Put in a paragraph with an update of new honors, activities, projects, grades, etc.)

Thank you for your continued interest and consideration on my behalf. I hope for good news in the spring.

Sincerely,

Your Name _____

SAMPLE LETTER IN RESPONSE TO WAIT-LIST

Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Director of Admission
Name of School
City, State, Zip

Dear Director of Admission (use the name of the letter you received),

I was disappointed to have been put on the wait-list at (name of school), and I want you to know that (name of school) remains my first choice college. If I am admitted, I do intend to enroll. I appreciate your continued consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Your Name

(Be sure to call the college or return the enclosed card and also notify your counselor if you are waitlisted and decide to stay on the list. Many times she can call the college on your behalf or write another letter. Both of you can share any new information with the college. Sometimes alumni can also effectively call or write at this point, but be careful not to have too many calls and letters.)

Common mistakes in the college financial aid game...

The Cincinnati Enquirer asked member of the National Association for College Admissions Counselors to identify the most common mistakes families make with regard to financial aid. College officials, high-school guidance counselors and independent consultants responded with this lists:

- Not applying for aid because they think they won't qualify.
- Assuming expensive private colleges are out of the questions, when some may offer significant aid.
- Waiting too long to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form with the U. S. Department of Education. The paperwork determines how much federal aid families may receive and can be submitted as early as January 1 of the college-entering year. Many selective colleges make financial aid decisions by February 15, using information from this form.
- The application process calls for figures from the current year's tax return, but families should not wait until they do their taxes to submit the forms, which are available on the Internet or from high school guidance counselors. Tax information can be estimated and corrected later.
- Believing there are thousands of dollars available through scholarships if students will only search for them. Significant national scholarships go only to "superstars". Solid-but-not-spectacular students would be better off pursuing local scholarships for which there is less competition. High school guidance counselors collect information about these available scholarships. Many can also be found on free Web sites, such as www.fastweb.com. See "Surfing the Webb" in this booklet.
- Assuming financial aid from a college often means borrowing money and working.
- Failing to understand that financing college often means borrowing money and working.
- Paying companies to search for aid or scholarships. Searches should be free. Paid services are often scams.
- Assuming students will get a good deal at an out-of-state, public university. Many such schools reserve their need-based aid for in-state residents.

TESTING SERVICES ON THE WEB

Information on test dates and locations, online test registration, and sample test questions and answers for the ACT and SAT are available at the Web sites of American College Testing and The

College Board. Students can get early access to their ACT Test scores at www.actstudent.org. Click on the link for "Early Scores" (includes \$8 charge).

ACT
College Board (SAT, PSAT, AP)
GRE

www.act.org or www.actstudent.org
www.collegeboard.com
www.gre.org

COLLEGE GUIDES

These sites provide descriptions of colleges, searchable databases of colleges by Major, online college applications, and information on summer programs.

College Board
Peterson's
Princeton Review

www.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp
www.petersons.com
www.princetonreview.com

COLLEGE & SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHES

www.fastweb.com
www.collegeboard.org
www.gocollege.com
www.collegenet.com
www.act.org
www.review.com
www.collegexpress.com
www.eCampusTours.com
www.regents.state.la.us (Click on "High School Students")
www.csfa.org
www.act.org
www.nasfaa.org
www.finaid.org
www.makingitcount.com
www.fastweb.com
ecampustours@edfinancial.com
www.educaid.com (Each month, Educaid awards a \$5,000 scholarship to seniors planning to attend college or vocational school.)

LOAN SERVICERS & FINANCIAL AID

Nelnet
Sallie Mae
FinAid
Louisiana Board of Regents
LOSFA (TOPS, etc.)
Louisiana Ed. Loan Authority
FAFSA

www.nelnet.net
www.salliemae.com
www.finaid.com
www.regents.state.la.us
www.osfa.state.la.us
www.lela.org
www.fafsa.ed.gov
www.ed.gov/studentaid

JOB & CAREER SITES

www.monster.com www.laworks.net www.educationindex.com
www.hotjobs.com www.quintcareers.com www.nextstepmagazine.com
www.flipdog.com www.students.gov www.stats.bls.gov/ocohome.htm

Additional Resources

College Information:

(Includes Facts, Data, and Information)

Peterson's Guide to Two-Year Colleges/Peterson's
Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges/Peterson's
College Handbook/College Board
Complete Book of Colleges/ The Princeton Review
Profiles of American Colleges/Barron's
The College Board Book of Majors/College Board

(Includes Rankings, Ratings, Opinions)

Ruggs's Recommendations on the Colleges/Frederick Rugg
Fiske Guide to Colleges/Edward B. Fiske
Competitive Colleges: Top Colleges for Top Students/Peterson's
Best Buys in College Education/Barron's
Barron's Guide to The Most Competitive Colleges/Barron's
The Best 357 Colleges/The Princeton Review
America's Elite Colleges/Dave Berry and David Hawsey, Princeton Review
The College Finder/Steven R. Antonoff, Fawcett Boods
The Public Ivies: Greenes' Guides to Educational Planning/H. Greene, M. Greene

SAT and ACT Preparation Guides

Cracking to New SAT/Princeton Review
The New SAT 2005/Kaplan
Peterson's Ultimate New SAT Tool Kit/Peterson's
The Official SAT Study Guide (New SAT)/College Board
Getting Into the ACT: Official Guide to the ACT/ACT, Harcourt Brace
Crash Course for the ACT, Cracking the ACT/Princeton Review
Kaplan ACT/Kaplan
Peterson's Ultimate ACT Assessment Tool Kit/Peterson's
Cliffs TestPrep: Act/Jerry Bobrow, Cliffs Notes
Panic Plan for the ACT Assessment: Your 2-Week Crash Course/Peterson's

Scholarship and Financial Aid

College Cost & Financial Aid Handbook, Scholarship Handbook/College Board
Scholarship Almanac, Scholarships Grants & Prizes/Peterson's
Winning Scholarships for College, An Insider's Guide/Marianne Ragins, Holt
The Scholarship Book/Prentice Hall
The Complete Scholarship Book/Sourcebooks, Inc.
Sports Scholarships & College Athletic Programs/Peterson's
Athletic Scholarships/Andy Clark and Amy Clark