



# The College Planning Guide

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*The adventure begins...*

**CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE**

Dear Chatham High School Families,

You are about to embark on an exciting new chapter of your life. Researching and ultimately defining a post-graduation plan is a big job and requires considerable time and effort. This handbook is intended as a road map to help you find your way. From terminology, to what to do next, to completing applications and financial aid.... Unsure of what you want to do? Career Cruising is a great place to go for career interest research. There are plenty of other helpful resources listed at the end of this guide, too.

And of course, please remember that we are here to help!

Sincerely,

Mr. Lombardi and Mrs. Carroll

Chatham High School Guidance

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## Why Go to College?

*(How about to get a good job?)*

### *Can't I get a good job now?*

Yes, maybe you could but a college degree will make your chances even better. Check out the earnings and unemployment rates below for people 25 years and older with different levels of education.

Unemployment rate in 2014	Level of education completed	Mean (average) earnings completed
9.0%	Less than a high school diploma	\$30,108
6.0%	High school graduate, no college	\$43,056
6.0%	Some college, no degree	\$48,984
4.3%	Occupational program (career school)	\$48,152
4.6%	Associate degree (academic program)	\$52,364
3.5%	Bachelor's degree	\$74,308
2.8%	Master's degree	\$88,036
2.1%	Doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D.)	\$105,456
1.9%	Professional degree (e.g., M.D., J.D.)	\$124,904

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey, unpublished tables, 2015

Sometimes it's hard to stay in school if you think you need to be working to earn money. But if you get an education beyond high school, you'll have a wider variety of jobs to choose from, and you'll earn more—especially in the long run.

But I don't know what career to go into!

If you can't decide what to do, talk to your school counselor or visit [StudentAid.gov/prepare](http://StudentAid.gov/prepare) to find out how to prepare for college and explore your career options.

Doesn't college cost a lot of money?

Think of college as an investment. You spend money now so you can earn more later. The U.S. Department of Education may help you pay for your education. Take a look at [StudentAid.gov](http://StudentAid.gov) for information about our federal student aid programs. The site also links to a free scholarship search at [StudentAid.gov/scholarships](http://StudentAid.gov/scholarships).

Still have questions: Call the federal Student Aid information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)

Download this fact sheet at [StudentAid.gov/resources](http://StudentAid.gov/resources).

FederalStudentAid – An Office of the U.S. Department of Education

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# College Admissions Terminology

## Rolling Admissions

- ✓ completed applications are reviewed in the order they are received
- ✓ decisions are returned as soon as they are available
- ✓ many state universities use this plan
- ✓ it is advantageous to apply early in the fall of your senior year

## Regular Decision

- ✓ students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time

## Early Decision (Binding Decision) Plan

- ✓ application to your FIRST CHOICE college early in senior year
- ✓ if accepted, you are contractually obligated to attend
- ✓ decisions are usually rendered in December
- ✓ dates and plans vary among schools
- ✓ you may be accepted, denied, or deferred (automatically have your application held for reconsideration in the regular applicant pool)

## Early Action (Non-Binding Decision) Plan

- ✓ application to your FIRST CHOICE college early in senior year
- ✓ even though decision is rendered early, you are **not** required to attend
- ✓ dates and plans vary among schools

## Deferred Admission

- ✓ the opportunity to delay or defer enrollment for a semester or a year
- ✓ you may work, travel, or pursue special interests/programs
- ✓ generally you may not attend another college during the deferral period unless the college is notified in advance and agrees
- ✓ a deposit is often required by the college to hold a place in the next entering class
- ✓ the college may expect the student to account for the time spent between graduation and the actual matriculation

## Wait List

- ✓ an admission decision option utilized by institutions to protect against shortfalls in enrollment
- ✓ institution does not initially offer or deny admission but extends the possibility of admission in the future- usually before the institution's admission cycle is concluded

## Common application

- ✓ allows student to fill out one application (the common App) and recommendation forms for filing at more than one college
- ✓ application is available online at [Links to the Common Application](#) where you can submit your applications electronically

**Important Note:** Familiarize yourself with each college's requirements. Talk with your counselor and ask questions if you don't understand the program completely. Source: National Association of College Admissions Counselors, **A Guide to the College Admissions Process.**

## What are colleges looking for?

Listed below are the most important factors considered by college admissions offices. What steps can you take to better prepare yourself for the college admission process?

### ❖ A strong GPA

**What it says to a college:** This student is conscientious and potentially capable of passing courses at our college.

### ❖ A robust course load

**What it says to a college:** This student had challenged him/herself with as many upper level courses he/she can handle, and has taken advantage of the resources offered by the school.

### ❖ Strong SAT / ACT scores

**What it says to a college:** This student has the innate and learned ability to handle college level courses and be successful, and not likely to fail and/or withdraw or drop out of school. The percentage of students who fail and/or withdraw/drop out of the school lowers the school's retention rate (which is very important to a college's image and is in their best interest to keep as high as possible).

### ❖ Community Service (Service Learning)

**What it says to a college:** This is a caring and compassionate student that gives up his/her free time to help others in need. This student may have been exposed to others who are fortunate and has decided to reach out, hopefully resulting in the ability to show empathy for others and an appreciation for those different from him/her. (An increasing number of colleges are awarding scholarships based on service.)

### ❖ Participation in Clubs/Sports/Activities

**What it says to a college:** This student has made a contribution to his/her school and is a doer. He/she is likely to become involved in clubs and activities at our college too.

### ❖ Part time Employment

**What it says to a college:** This student may have a strong work ethic, holding a job for a significant period of time. This student has had valuable work experience.

### ❖ Strong Counselor and Teacher letters of Recommendation

**What this says to a college:** This student is being supported by people in the field of education who are putting their professional opinion in writing; therefore, what they say holds a lot of weight and is taken seriously.

### ❖ Perseverance/Overcoming Obstacles

**What this says to a college:** This student has overcome adversity, or a significant obstacle in their young life. This proves her/she will not be quick to give up, drop out, or fall to pieces when faced with challenges in college.

# Researching Colleges

## *Where do I begin?*

*The college search begins with you.*

Deciding on colleges to apply to involves a process of self-assessment. What type of environment am I comfortable in? What do I want to study? How far from home? Likelihood of acceptance? The good news is that there are many schools where you would be happy and there are many schools that will accept you! How do you go about finding those schools?

There are resources to help you find schools that will be a good fit, the Chatham High School Guidance website has links to Career Cruising and Big Future, where you can search for colleges based on the criteria that matter to you. There are also endless online resources to help you refine your choices. Remember to speak with family, friends, teachers and other people in your lives about their advice and experiences.

[Links to a career information site](#)

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>

[Links to information about many colleges and universities](#)

## Your College Search: Important Considerations

- **Size of School**
- **Geographical Location** – Distance from home, weather, travel expenses
- **Urban, Suburban, Rural** – City lights, outside a city, peaceful rural
- **College Majors** – Check that the college majors you are considering are available
- **Quality of Academic Programs** – Class size, professor credentials, lab facilities, internships, research opportunities
- **Environment** – Conservative, liberal, religious, diverse, sports enthusiasm, artsy, fraternities/sororities
- **Special Programs** – Athletics, ROTC, educational support services
- **Cost** – State schools, private schools, financial aid possibilities
- **Competitiveness of Admission** – How do my academic credentials match admission standards and how challenging will it be if I attend?
- **Facilities** – Technology, fitness centers, dorms, dining halls
- **Extracurricular Opportunities** – Clubs, sports, music, theater, activities
- **Opportunities for Study Abroad**

## Factors that are Important to Admissions

### ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- ✓ Grades are important and colleges will look closely at your transcript to assess your success in the courses you've taken.
- ✓ Positive grade trends are expected and mid-year senior grades are reviewed.

### COURSE SELECTION

- ✓ Colleges seek students who have challenged themselves.
- ✓ Colleges expect students to continue to challenge themselves senior year.

### TEST SCORES

- ✓ The SAT I or the ACT is required for most colleges.
- ✓ Some of the more selective colleges require SAT II Subject Tests.
- ✓ Check with specific colleges for their requirements and consult with your school counselor.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Colleges are interested in how a teacher evaluates you as a classroom participant.
- ✓ They are also interested in the counselor's recommendation because it encompasses both academic and social components.
- ✓ Be considerate of your teachers and school counselor. Give them ample time to prepare your letter of recommendation. Recommendations must be requested early in the fall of senior year.

### APPLICATION ESSAY

- ✓ Colleges look closely at the student's part of the application, in particular, the quality of the essay.
- ✓ The essay is an opportunity to express your personality. Give yourself sufficient time to your best work.
- ✓ Proofread your work carefully for neatness and accuracy.

### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/COMMUNITY SERVICE

- ✓ The emphasis here is usually on quality not quantity.
- ✓ Talent, leadership, and genuine contributions to a team or activity over time are important.

## Two-Year versus Four-Year

*Which is right for you?*

	Community Colleges (2 Years)	Colleges/Universities (4 Years)
<b>Admissions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students get accepted to their local community college, but not necessarily to the program of their choice</li> <li>Quick and streamlined application process</li> <li>SAT's/ACT's not required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varying acceptance rates from less selective to highly selective.</li> <li>More involved application process, generally including an essay and letters of recommendation requirements</li> <li>SAT's/ACT's often required</li> </ul>
<b>Cost</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost of attendance is significantly lower</li> <li>Families may qualify for less Financial Aid (FAFSA), although high ranking students may be eligible for merit scholarships.</li> <li>Important to consider commuting costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuition plus room, board and other expenses are substantially higher than community colleges</li> <li>Families may qualify for more Financial Aid (FAFSA and/or CSS Profile) since these schools have access to more resources</li> <li>Students typically live on campus, but should consider costs of returning home for holidays and vacations</li> </ul>
<b>Degree Types</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certificate programs</li> <li>Associate's Degree programs that lead to employment</li> <li>Associate's Degree programs that lead to a 4-year college transfer. Transfers can often be seamless between schools with articulation (transfer) agreements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree programs with some offering Master's and Doctoral programs.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocational Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer various vocational programs like mechanics or nursing. Students take classes that are specifically linked to certain careers/certifications and have a different timeline than a "traditional degree" route.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May have vocational programs, but students earn an advanced degree, which may lead to increased long-term opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Lifestyle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although many 2 year colleges have vibrant extracurricular opportunities, being at a commuter school can make participation more challenging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the majority of students living on campus, the social atmosphere of a 4 year college can be a rich and rewarding experience.</li> </ul>

**It is important to know which degree type is required for your future professional goal.**



## Building Your List

**Your** list of colleges to which you will apply should be a result of a team effort between the student, parents and counselor. Each person brings knowledge that is important to the planning process. Your self-reflection regarding goals, skills, abilities and special talents or needs, is a key factor in college selection. Parental support is extremely valuable to this process. Parents may offer their own career and/or college experiences, as well as geographic and financial guidelines. Counselors have a good feel for the academic fit of a college, the reputation of majors at a given school, and the ability to support the student through the search process.

**After** using some of the college search engines or visiting with college admissions representatives, you may end up with a long list of schools of interest, depending on the particulars of your situation. Campus visits and further discussion will usually help refine the list.

**Any** student's list should represent a range of selectivity. When it comes time to submit applications, many students will have a list of schools that are broken into three categories: Reach schools, target schools and safety schools. Be sure to keep in mind that particular programs within a college or university may have more stringent entrance requirements than others.

**Reach schools** – You may not meet all of the criteria of previously accepted students.

**Target schools** – You stand a good chance of being accepted to these schools. Your record meets most, if not all, of the criteria of previously accepted students.

**Safety schools** - You are certain to be accepted. You meet all of the criteria for admission.

## College Visits

**Visiting** the colleges you are interested in is an important part of the college search process. Although college websites and publications have good information, there is simply no substitute for the firsthand experience of being on campus. This experience is the best way to determine whether you will feel comfortable in that setting...whether you will “fit in” with the students, whether the classes will provide you with the type of academic environment that suits your learning style and whether the location is right for you.

### Planning your visit...

- ❖ Spring of junior year is the most common time to visit colleges. Typically, students will visit beginning second semester of junior year, through the summer, and into the fall of senior year.
- ❖ Resist the temptation to do a “drive through.” Instead, register ahead of time with admissions offices. Most have a “Visit” section on their website. Colleges track potential students' visits. When admissions representatives read your application, they will know whether or not you took the time to attend an open house or individual tour. Visiting is an important way to demonstrate to colleges that you are a serious candidate.
- ❖ Tours and open houses often include visits to the library, dining facilities, dorms, and academic buildings.
- ❖ Some colleges offer overnight visits. This is a great option for some students who really want to have an idea of students' study habits as well as dorm and social activities on campus.

## Tips for Making the Most of Your College Visit

Be a careful consumer when you visit a college. You must be comfortable with the programs, people and places where you will live for two to four years.

Familiarize yourself with the college website and admissions material before your visit and develop a list of questions.

- Visit the academic buildings. Meet with a faculty member from the department(s) of the major(s) you might be interested in and ask specific questions. They will be more knowledgeable than the admissions office about their subject. If possible, attend a class. Do students appear engaged? Do students participate? What is the rapport between the professor and students? Would you feel comfortable in this setting?
- Check out the dining facilities. Ask about meal plan options.
- If you have a favorite sport or activity, visit the Athletic Center and ask some questions.
- Go to the Admissions office and ask about available resources for academic assistance. Also, what is their policy on accepting AP or dual-enrollment credits?
- Take a walk to the library. See if the library is used for studying. How hard is it to get a study table? Determine their hours and security arrangements for students leaving facilities late in the evening.
- Ask about other areas to study on campus. Are there study lounges in the residence halls?
- A visit to the Financial Aid Office is important. Most schools will tell you if they have financial aid packages based on need. Additional information to gather should include: merit scholarships, the average aid award, work study and part-time jobs in the area.
- Is housing guaranteed for all four years? Discuss residential options. Ask about roommate selection procedures.
- Walk over to the health clinic and ask about those facilities. For example, how long is the average wait to see a health practitioner?
- Be sure to visit the campus while classes are in session, preferably during the school year as opposed to the summer session. Sit in on a class and see how the students and faculty interact.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. Campuses can be intimidating. This is a huge investment. The more questions the better!

## Questions to Ask Current College Students on Your Visit

- *Why did you choose this college?*
- *Has the college lived up to your expectations?*
- *What has surprised you about the school?*
- *What has disappointed you?*
- *What do the students in your major say about the program?*
- *How do the students like their residence hall experience?*
- *What do students do for entertainment?*
- *Do students appear pleased about the education they are receiving?*
- *What are the social and academic issues that have come up during the year?*
- *Are the residence halls quiet enough to get studying done?*
- *What percent of students go home on weekends? Is this a "suitcase" or commuter school?*

# College Visit Checklist

To help you find the right college, fill out one of these forms each time you visit a school.

College Name \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Size \_\_\_\_\_ Tuition \_\_\_\_\_ Room/Board \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Aid Options \_\_\_\_\_

## Admissions Contact

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### To-Do-Checklist

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to professors              | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to students                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit the library               | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit student housing                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tour campus                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Read bulletin boards                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit in on a class               | <input type="checkbox"/> Check out student activities          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at a cafeteria              | <input type="checkbox"/> Tour the area around campus           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to an admissions counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at an off-campus student hang-out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the college newspaper      | <input type="checkbox"/> Picture yourself living here          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check out computer labs         |  |

**Rate it- On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best, rate the following:**

People \_\_\_\_\_  
Social Life \_\_\_\_\_  
Classrooms \_\_\_\_\_  
Residence Halls \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_  
Campus \_\_\_\_\_  
Food \_\_\_\_\_

### Ask a Student

What is the best part about this college? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the worst part? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a typical day like? \_\_\_\_\_

What do the students do on the weekends? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose this college? \_\_\_\_\_

### The Best Part About My Visit

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### The Worst Part About My Visit

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## College Admissions for Students with Learning Disabilities/Special Needs

While the general information presented in this guide is valuable for all students, there are issues specific to students with special needs that are addressed.

### *Before Applying to Colleges*

**Accommodations for Standardized Testing:** Students do not automatically receive the same testing accommodations on standardized tests that they receive on in-school testing. Accommodations must be approved by the College Board (SAT) or the ACT well in advance of your first test date. The accommodations request process typically begins in the Spring of Sophomore year, with your school counselor.

**PSAT/SAT:** Once approved for accommodations from the College Board, a student receives an SSD code. The SSD code must be used every time the student registers for the SAT. Applications for testing accommodations are typically submitted during the annual review in spring of Sophomore year.

**ACT plus Writing:** Test accommodations are requested at the time of registration. Your counselor must provide critical information to ACT. So include Guidance in your plans early. There are three types of testing accommodation request forms to choose from. See your counselor to confirm which form is most appropriate based on your IEP.

### *When it's Time to Apply to College*

Neither student transcripts nor standardized test scores indicate a student has received support services in school or has used test accommodations. Colleges will know about your disability and special needs only if you choose to release that information. Since it is important to find the *best fit* for a student, most families do choose to divulge the information, but the choice is yours.

Please see your school counselor if you would like assistance identifying colleges with good reputations in assisting students with disabilities.

When students move from high school to college their services and test accommodations do not continue automatically. Colleges will make their own determination regarding these issues and will typically require a current (within three years), psycho-educational evaluation in order to make those determinations. If a student does not have current testing, an evaluation should be arranged privately by the family.

When visiting colleges, students with special needs should plan enough time on campus to adequately investigate the program and services provided. This should include seeing the area where services are offered and ideally meeting key staff members assigned to work with students. Conversation with students who are currently enrolled in the program would be helpful as well.

### *Post High School Services*

ACCES/VR offers access to a full range of employment and independent living services that may be needed by persons with disabilities through their lives. Through its administration of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs, ACCES/VR coordinates policy and services relating to:

- *Assessment to help identify skills, abilities, interests and limitations.*
- *Career Counseling and guidance.*
- *Training at a vocational school, community college, or on the job.*
- *Supported employment, job placement and job retention.*
- *Other services necessary to achieve employment goal.*

## College Admissions for Students with Specific Talents and Interests

### Athletics

- Talk to your high school or club coach to make sure they know you are interested in pursuing sports in college.
- Express your interest to the coaches at the schools you are applying to. When visiting, try to arrange meetings with college coaches.
- Be prepared to submit an athletic resume, if required.
- To be eligible to participate in Division I or Division II college athletics, students must be cleared by the NCAA (National College Athletic Association) Clearinghouse. Students planning to play Division I or Division II athletics should register with the NCAA in the Spring of their Junior year: [National College Athletic Association website](#) Unsure of NCAA Clearinghouse requirements? See your school counselor or visit the above link.
- Be sure to let your school counselor know that you are registering with the NCAA Clearinghouse, as transcripts will need to be provided.

### Visual and Performing Arts

- Talk to your music and/or dance teacher(s) to make sure they know you are interested in pursuing performing arts in college. They have knowledge that will help you through the process.
- Be prepared to submit a recording, original sheet music, and/or audition in-person. Deadlines for these submissions are sometimes different than college application deadlines. Carefully research requirements with your specific colleges of interest.
- Be prepared to submit a portfolio when applying for a visual arts major. Your art teachers can help you select pieces that demonstrate your skills.

### ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps)

- Students in ROTC are taking a course load comparable to that of most full-time college students. In addition to regular academics, they study military science, military history, and develop leadership skills.
- Interested students need to apply and be accepted at a college or university that offers an ROTC program.
- In exchange for full tuition, fees and books, upon graduation, students are obligated to serve an active duty period (typically two to six years) as commissioned officers.
- For more information:  
[Reserve Officer Training Corps website](#)  
[www.nrotc.navy.mil/](http://www.nrotc.navy.mil/)  
[Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps website](#)

## College Admissions Testing

### *Which test(s) to take?*

Students who will apply to one or more four year colleges or universities during fall of their senior year of high school, will almost certainly be required to submit SAT and/or ACT scores as part of their application. Although some four year colleges have “test optional” policies, the majority of schools will require applicants to submit scores. Students should consult the colleges they will be applying to for information regarding college admission testing requirements.

### **PSAT/NMSQT- Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test**

The PSAT is a practice for the SAT. Students typically take the test in the fall of their junior year. Unlike the SAT, the PSAT is administered during the school day, and registration takes place through the high school Guidance Office. The results of the PSAT are useful for students to help them determine areas of strength and weakness, to provide focus as they prepare for the SAT.

#### *PSAT at a glance...*

- ✓ taken in October of the junior year
- ✓ provides a practice test for the SAT Reasoning Test (but does not include a writing sample)
- ✓ useful as an indicator of SAT scores
- ✓ not used in the admission process or sent to colleges
- ✓ qualifying test for participation in the National Merit Scholarship Program

### **SAT:**

The SAT is a measure of Evidence-based Reading, Writing, and Math. The SAT provides a standardized measure of a student’s college readiness. It is typically taken during Spring of junior year, and Fall of senior year. The Evidence-based Reading & Writing and Math sections are scored on a scale of 200-800 each. The exam is approximately three hours long, with an additional fifty minutes for the optional essay. Students should consult the colleges to which they plan to apply to determine whether or not to take the essay portion.

#### *SAT at a glance...*

- ✓ required test for admission to most four-year colleges
- ✓ primarily a multiple-choice examination with one written essay
- ✓ measures writing, critical reading and math ability
- ✓ scored from 200(low) to 800(high) on each section
- ✓ generally taken in spring of the junior year
- ✓ may be taken again in the senior year

### **SAT Subject Tests:**

SAT Subject Tests are primarily multiple-choice tests in specific subjects. They measure knowledge or skills in a particular area and the student’s ability to apply that knowledge. Most colleges use the SAT as a component of the admissions process, while the selective colleges may *also* require Subject Tests. Each Subject Test is based on one academic area and is one hour in length. Students may take up to three Subject Tests on any given test date. Some allow students to choose which Subject Tests to submit while others have specific Subject Test requirement.

#### *Subject Tests at a glance...*

- ✓ primarily multiple-choice tests in specific subjects
- ✓ scored on a 200 to 800 scale
- ✓ possible to take up to three SAT Subject Tests on one test date
- ✓ required by some colleges for either admission or class placement

## ACT:

The ACT is a national college admission exam that consists of subject area tests in English, Mathematics, Reading and Science Reasoning. The ACT Plus Writing includes the four subject area tests and a 30-minute Writing test. ACT scores are reported on a scale of 1-36 and is approximately three hours long, with an additional forty minutes for the essay.

### *ACT at a glance...*

- ✓ Accepted in lieu of SAT Test at some colleges
- ✓ Accepted in lieu of SAT Subject Tests at some colleges
- ✓ Composed of four sections:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Reading
  - Science Reasoning
- ✓ Optional writing section

## Test Optional Schools

A number of four year schools require no standardized testing; neither the SAT nor ACT Tests. Some of these may require additional student input such as submission of a graded paper. Once again, be sure to check your schools' requirements carefully.

## Registering for SAT and ACT

Chatham High School is a testing center for both SAT and ACT. We traditionally host a fall and spring test date for each exam.

Our school CEEB code is 331325. Please have this number on hand when registering.

- ✓ Register for SAT's online at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>
- ✓ Register for ACT's online at <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/register.html>

Please note there is a charge to register for the SAT and ACT. Payment is due to the testing agency when you register. Some students may qualify for a fee waiver (generally students who receive free or reduced price lunch). Please see your school counselor for more information.

## Requesting Test Accommodations

If you have accommodations for school testing and would like to apply to use them for the SAT or ACT, please see your counselor and review these links:

- ✓ SAT: <https://www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities/eligibility>
- ✓ ACT: <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/accommodations.html#student>

## Reporting Scores to Colleges

Most colleges require the official SAT and/or ACT scores be sent directly from the testing agency to the college's admissions office.

There are two ways to have test scores reported to colleges:

1. When students register for the SAT and/or the ACT they can request to have scores sent directly to colleges at no additional cost.
2. Students can log onto their SAT and/or ACT account later, and request to have scores sent to the colleges of their choice. Fees may apply. Students who used a fee waiver at the time of registration are eligible for a limited number of free score reports. Please see your school counselor for more information.

*When college transcripts are sent from the Guidance Office to a college, SAT and ACT scores are not included.*

## SAT/ACT Test Prep

It is recommended that students prepare in advance for college admissions testing. Practice helps students become familiar with the test questions and content, allowing them to feel more comfortable with the test(s), and therefore to do their best. From instructor-taught classes to self-guided texts or online programs, there are a variety of resources, some of which are free, available to help students prepare for SAT's and ACT's.

One free program, the Khan Academy, partners with the College Board to provide students with free, online, self-guided SAT preparation. <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice/khan-academy>

ACT offers free sample questions, questions of the day and test-taking strategies through their website: <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation.html>

There are some classroom-based test prep programs offered locally, as well. Please speak with your school counselor for more information on these classes.

## SAT-ACT Conversion Tables

SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT
1600	36	1250	26	900	17
1590	35	1240	26	890	16
1580	35	1230	25	880	16
1570	35	1220	25	870	16
1560	35	1210	25	860	16
1550	34	1200	25	850	15
1540	34	1190	24	840	15
1530	34	1180	24	830	15
1520	34	1170	24	820	15
1510	33	1160	24	810	15
1500	33	1150	23	800	14
1490	33	1140	23	790	14
1480	32	1130	23	780	14
1470	32	1120	22	770	14
1460	32	1110	22	760	14
1450	32	1100	22	750	13
1440	31	1090	21	740	13
1430	31	1080	21	730	13
1420	31	1070	21	720	13
1410	30	1060	21	710	12
1400	30	1050	20	700	12
1390	30	1040	20	690	12
1380	29	1030	20	680	12
1370	29	1020	20	670	12
1360	29	1010	19	660	12
1350	29	1000	19	650	12
1340	28	990	19	640	12
1330	28	980	19	630	12
1320	28	970	18	620	11
1310	28	960	18	610	11
1300	27	950	18	600	11
1290	27	940	18	590	11
1280	27	930	17	580	11
1270	26	920	17	570	11
1260	26	910	17	560	11

Source: <http://blog.prepscholar.com/act-to-sat-conversion>



## I am ready to apply... now what?

### *When do I apply???*

Students typically begin submitting college applications during the fall of their senior year. The admissions pages of college websites will provide you with details regarding important deadlines for admissions. Generally, these are some types of deadlines to be aware of:

#### **Rolling Admissions**

- ✓ completed applications are reviewed in the order they are received
- ✓ decisions are returned as soon as they are available
- ✓ many state universities use this plan
- ✓ it is advantageous to apply early in the fall of your senior year

#### **Regular Decision**

- ✓ students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time

#### **Early Decision (Binding Decision) Plan**

- ✓ application to your FIRST CHOICE college early in senior year
- ✓ If accepted, you are contractually obligated to attend
- ✓ decisions are usually rendered in December
- ✓ dates and plans vary among schools
- ✓ you may be accepted, denied, or deferred (automatically have your application held for reconsideration in the regular applicant pool)

#### **Early Action (Non-Binding Decision) Plan**

- ✓ application to a top CHOICE college early in senior year
- ✓ even though decision is rendered early, you are not required to attend
- ✓ dates and plans vary among schools

The type of application you will complete will depend on the schools you are applying to.

## How do I apply?

### **Two Year Colleges:**

Most of our area two-year colleges have streamlined applications that can be done online and/or via Instant Admissions days held in the CHS Guidance Office. These schools typically require a high school transcript, a completed application, and possibly an application fee.

### **Four Year Colleges and Universities:**

Although varying in format, most four year colleges require the following information as part of their application. It is very helpful to have these items at the ready when you are working on your application(s).

- Demographics and Family Information
- Information about Chatham High School
- Transcript
- Extracurricular Activities and Other Experiences
- Honors and Awards
- Essay
- Letter(s) of Recommendation (\*See notes next page)
- SAT/ACT scores (official scores must be sent directly from SAT or ACT to your college(s) of choice)

It is important the students research the schools they are applying to in order to determine which type of application is best to use:

- Common Application
- SUNY Application
- Individual school application

In addition, a conversation with your school counselor can help you make this decision based on your individual situation.

## Common Application

The Common Application is one application that is accepted by nearly 700 four year colleges and universities nationwide, including SUNY four year colleges. Because many Chatham High School students apply to a combination of private and SUNY institutions, using the Common Application is a popular choice. The Common Application website has very helpful video tutorials for every section of the application. Of course, if you still have questions, stop in the Guidance office. Common Application website: [Common Application website](#)

## SUNY Application

If you plan to apply to schools within the SUNY (State University of New York) only, you may want to use the SUNY application site instead of the Common Application. Most students find the SUNY application more streamlined. Both the SUNY application and the Common Application are equally acceptable for SUNY institutions. SUNY Application and information website: [State of New York Universities website](#)

## Some thoughts about letters of recommendation

### *How & when to request recommendations:*

Many online applications require the student to invite a recommender (teacher, counselor, or other) to upload his or her letter to a website. Once the student enters the recommender's name and email address, an email invitation will be sent out. It is important that the student has first asked the recommenders of choice whether they would be willing to write the letter on his/her behalf.

Writing a thorough recommendation often takes time. Please do your recommenders the courtesy of requesting their letter well in advance of any deadlines. A minimum of two weeks lead time is generally acceptable.

### *How many and who should you ask?*

Most colleges prefer recommendations from more recent teachers. Typically, two recommendations will be required. If possible, avoid asking teachers from earlier than 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and avoid asking teachers from the same academic discipline. Depending on the college and/or your intended major, you might be required to have one or more recommendations from a particular subject area. For example, a potential engineering major may need a letter from a science teacher. Select recommenders that make sense for your intended plans.

### *Confidentiality*

The Common Application gives students a choice between waiving or not waiving their ability to read recommendation letters. Colleges generally prefer that students do not read the letters (in other words, that they *do waive their ability to read the letters*). This allows teachers to speak freely about the student's strengths and weaknesses without bias.

### *Be organized!*

Applying to colleges can sometimes feel overwhelming. It is important to be aware of application deadlines, and requirements for each of the schools you are applying to. Plan ahead. Completing applications takes time, so start early and put forth your best effort. Make sure your applications are completed thoroughly. For better or for worse, colleges are making a judgment based on the information *you* provide!

# COLLEGE APPLICATION WORKSHEET

**COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADMISSIONS:** Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ FAX # \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** \_\_\_\_\_ Early Decision (*Binding*)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Early Action  
\_\_\_\_\_ Regular Decision

**APPLICATION:** Date sent \_\_\_\_\_  
School Application \_\_\_\_\_  
Common Application Accepted \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No  
Common Application Supplement \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No  
SUNY Application \_\_\_\_\_

**TESTS SCORES:** ACT Date sent: \_\_\_\_\_ Required \_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_  
SAT I Date sent: \_\_\_\_\_ Required \_\_\_ Optional \_\_\_  
SAT II (Subject Test) Date sent: \_\_\_\_\_ Required \_\_\_

**TRANSCRIPT:** Date sent: \_\_\_\_\_

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:** Number Required \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Date sent \_\_\_\_\_

**ESSAY SENT:** \_\_\_\_\_ Required \_\_\_ Not Required \_\_\_

**OPEN HOUSE DATES:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CAMPUS VISIT DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **INTERVIEW SCHEDULED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FINANCIAL AID DEADLINES:**

School Financial Aid Forms \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

FAFSA (Priority Deadline for School) \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

CSS PROFILE \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES:**

## The Essay

There are entire books solely to advise students on how to write an amazing college application essay. The CHS Library has several available for students. Also, the English teachers at Chatham are a wealth of knowledge, and a terrific resource. Remember that there is usually a word limit for your essay that may be surprisingly short, given the importance of this part of the application. Here are some quick tips to remember:

- ✓ Start early.
- ✓ Be yourself.
- ✓ Be honest.
- ✓ Be original. Write an essay that will make you stand out.
- ✓ Write and re-write
- ✓ Proofread
- ✓ Get a second opinion

## Financial Aid and Scholarships

### *What is Financial Aid?*

Financial Aid is any grant, scholarship, loan, or paid employment offered to help a student meet college expenses. Financial Aid is provided by various sources such as federal and state agencies, college endowments, and non-profit or private organizations. The amount of financial aid a student receives is determined by federal, state, and institutional guidelines.

### *Eligibility for Financial Aid*

The federal government uses a formula derived from information submitted in the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC).

The FAFSA is a document that must be filed with the federal government after October 1<sup>st</sup> of the student's high school senior year to receive any need based financial aid. This form must be filed each year the student plans to attend college. The FAFSA should be submitted online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

The EFC is the amount of money determined by the federal government that the family can contribute to a year of the student's annual cost of attendance. Factors such as family size, number of family members attending college, family savings and the family's current earning all contribute to the EFC. Families are notified of the EFC when they receive the Student Aid Report (SAR).

### **Cost of Education – Expected Family Contribution (EFC) = Aid Eligibility**

All colleges are required to have a Net Price Calculator on their website to assist you in early financial aid planning. This calculator will provide a preliminary estimate of federal, state and institutional aid eligibility to help families gauge what aid the student may be awarded. Keep in mind that the annual cost of attendance includes tuition, room and board, books, fees, travel expenses, and other extraneous costs.

Some private schools require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile to be filed in addition to the FAFSA. The Profile provides institutions with a more detailed account of the family's finances. The Profile may be submitted on-line at [www.collegeboard.com/profile](http://www.collegeboard.com/profile).

## Types of Financial Aid

### Grants

Grants are awards based on financial need, which do not have to be repaid.

Federal grants currently available are:

- ✓ Federal Pell Grant
- ✓ Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)
- ✓ Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH)
- ✓ Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant

Go to [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov) for additional information on the grants listed above. In addition, New York State offers the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) as a grant.

### Loans

Loans are funds that must be repaid. All students who apply for FAFSA are eligible for either subsidized or unsubsidized student loans (based on income).

#### Need Based Loans

- Stafford Loan (subsidized or unsubsidized) – a subsidized loan means the government pays the interest until the student begins repayment (six months after graduation or going below half time status). If the loan is unsubsidized then the student is responsible for the interest immediately. He or she can choose to pay the interest monthly or add it to the loan principal.
- Perkins Loan - awarded to students with exceptional financial need.

#### Non-Need Based Loans

- Parent Loans: The Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) – parents can borrow money to cover costs not covered by the students' financial aid package. This loan is available regardless of income or assets. Applications are available in the institution's financial aid office. A FAFSA is not necessary for this loan.
- Private Loans: supplement amount not covered by the aid package. Private loans are credit based and vary according to student/family situation and type of education. Check with your local bank, credit union, or other lenders such as SallieMae, etc.

### Work Study Program

Federal work-study provides on-campus jobs for students that enable them to contribute toward educational expenses. The monetary amount listed under work-study in your financial aid award letter represents the maximum amount of money you are allowed to earn for that school year.

### Helpful Financial Aid Hints

- All families are encouraged to complete the FAFSA even if federal assistance is unlikely, because schools and states often use FAFSA information to award non-federal aid. Also, it is helpful to file the FAFSA in the event that family circumstances suddenly change.
- Be particularly careful of financial search companies who "guarantee" money, especially if they charge a fee.
- Due to the personal nature of financial aid and in some cases, the complexity of this topic, the specific college financial aid office is the best source for up to date changes and information.
- It is advisable to consult a financial planner/accountant to ascertain if you can benefit from any tax advantages while paying for higher education and to determine how to best complete financial aid forms.
- Pay attention to deadlines; it is better to file early. Remember, the FAFSA cannot be filed before October 1<sup>st</sup>. However, you can go to [Free Application for Federal Student Aid website](#) to access

a worksheet which will explain which documents you will need when filling out the form and apply for a PIN prior to October 1<sup>st</sup>.

**NOTE: If a student does not meet regular admission criteria, but qualifies as economically disadvantaged, he/she may be eligible for EOP or HEOP programs, Contact specific colleges directly for more details.**

## Scholarships

Scholarships are short term, lump sum or renewable awards that are distributed according to criteria set by the scholarship provider (most are based on financial need, academic achievement, artistic/athletic ability, community service, leadership, etc.). We maintain a list of scholarships that are available through the CHS Guidance Office, both in the office and online:

[http://www.chathamcentralschools.com/hs/guidance\\_dept/scholarships/SCHOLARSHIPS.pdf](http://www.chathamcentralschools.com/hs/guidance_dept/scholarships/SCHOLARSHIPS.pdf)

### Scholarships are available through:

- Colleges and Universities – schools award scholarships to students based on academic achievement, artistic ability, athletic achievement (Division I and Division II schools), and/or community involvement. Typically, recipients of these scholarships are chosen based on admission application criteria. *Students are responsible to research scholarships through specific colleges.*
- Corporations, foundations, and parent employers – corporations use scholarships to advertise the company name and attract future employees, while giving the student financial assistance and professional contacts. Call local firms and check websites of national companies to see if they offer scholarships.
- Professional Associations – many professional organizations offer scholarships to students to encourage them to pursue a particular field of study.
- Community organizations – local civic groups frequently offer scholarships to help the young people in the community afford a college education.