

TAKING THE NEXT STEP - A SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION

FRESHMAN YEAR

- A. Begin the self-assessment process.
 - 1. Interests (school subjects, work experiences, hobbies)
 - 2. Aptitudes and values
- B. Begin building the best high school record you can.
 - 1. Challenging classes
 - 2. Grade point average
 - 3. Class rank
- C. Begin career exploration
 - 1. Utilize resources available in the College/Career Center in the Guidance Office.
 - 2. Personal exploration

II. SOPHOMORE YEAR

- A. Continue building the best high school record you can.
- B. Consider taking the PSAT in October.
- C. Take the PLAN (P-ACT) in November.
- D. Continue career exploration.

III. JUNIOR YEAR

- A. Continue self-assessment (take the PSAT in October, AVSAB in spring).
- B. Continue building the best high school record you can.
- C. Continue career exploration.
- D. Finalize your career choice (or at least your college major) if possible.
- E. Determine the best way to reach your goal.
 - 1. Four-year college
 - 2. Two-year college
 - 3. Technical school
 - 4. Military
 - 5. Apprenticeship, on-the-job training
 - 6. Other
- F. If you are headed for college or technical school, decide what characteristics are important (course of study, cost, size, location, extracurricular activities, other).
Make a preliminary list of schools that meet your requirements.
- G. Investigate schools on your list. Read the college catalogs (many are available in the Guidance Office), talk with current and former students, visit the college web sites; talk with college admission representatives when they visit Lakota, attend area College Fairs, visit college campuses.
- H. Take the ACT and/or the SAT college board tests when offered in spring. Registration packets are available in the Guidance Office.
- I. Some colleges are now permitting Early Action applications that can be submitted at the end of the junior year. Consider taking advantage of this opportunity if your school allows it.

IV. SENIOR YEAR

- A. Finish college visits in early fall.
- B. If you have a strong preference for one particular school, and that school has an Early Decision option, you may wish to submit that application in early fall. There are advantages and disadvantages to applying under Early Decision. We recommend you talk to your counselor if you are considering that option.
- C. Consider retaking the ACT/SAT (by the December test dates).
- D. Mail college applications in October and November. The majority of colleges have deadlines. Be sure to check.
- E. Complete the Free App for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after Jan. 1.
- F. Apply for any and all scholarships for which you might qualify.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS OF MOST COLLEGES

- 4 ENGLISH
- 3 MATHEMATICS (ALGEBRA I AND II, GEOMETRY)
- 3 SCIENCE (INCLUDING ONE PHYSICAL AND ONE BIOLOGICAL)
- 3 SOCIAL STUDIES
- 2 FOREIGN LANGUAGE (MUST BE SAME LANGUAGE)
- 1 FINE ARTS (ART, MUSIC, THEATER)

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM THAT WILL PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE

- 4+ ENGLISH
- 4+ MATHEMATICS
- 3+ SCIENCE
- 3+ SOCIAL STUDIES
- 3+ FOREIGN LANGUAGE
- 1 FINE ARTS

COLLEGE SELECTION CRITERIA: WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU

The key to finding the best college is knowing what you want ... and don't want!

Many factors will be important to you and your reasons for choosing a college will differ somewhat from those of your friends or others in your family. The checklists on these pages were designed to help you pinpoint your college selection criteria. We left additional space for you to add other priorities.

Go through each checklist and checkoff those criteria which are important to you. Then you may want to put them in priority order.

When you are reading about a college or visiting it, compare it with the criteria on your checklist. Do the college's characteristics match up well? You will probably want to pursue those that meet most of your needs, especially priority needs.

GENERAL COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS

- Degree of selectivity in admissions
- Atmosphere: what are the people and the general quality of life like?
- Location (distance from home, geographic character, area opportunities (urban vs. rural))
- Size of enrollment
- Four-year undergraduate college vs. undergraduate and graduate university
- Coed/Single sex
- Facilities (especially in areas important to you) and their condition
- Appearance of campus (attractive and well-kept)
- Availability of scholarships and financial aid
- Student employment opportunities
- Cost/Net cost after scholarships and financial aid
- Financial strength/endowment
- Retention rate
- Heritage and special traditions
- Family ties to a particular college
- Church affiliation

ACADEMIC LIFE

- Size of classes, student/faculty ratio
- Quality and availability of faculty (full-time teaching faculty vs. teaching assistants)
- Type of curriculum (liberal arts, vocational) or major
- Special interests or honors programs
- Flexibility in course selection
- Degree requirements
- Academic calendar (semesters/quarters)
- Off-campus programs
- International study opportunities
- Library (quality/quantity/facilities)
- Computer facilities
- Particular academic facilities

REPUTATION

- _____ General academic reputation
- _____ Alumni accomplishments
- _____ Reputation among graduate schools
- _____ Job placement record
- _____ Career Planning and Placement program

STUDENT LIFE

- _____ Students (calibre, diversity, friendliness)
- _____ Residential campus (as opposed to one with a substantial commuter population)
- _____ Housing (availability, quality, variety)
- _____ Food (quality, meal plans)
- _____ Campus activities (variety, quality, and availability of personal interests)
- _____ Athletics - intercollegiate, intramural, or recreational programs (variety, quality, and availability of those of personal interest)
- _____ Cultural opportunities
- _____ Social life

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR COLLEGE VISIT

Now that you've sent away for information and received all kinds of materials which describe the colleges, do you find yourself confused? Do you wonder if they are just showing you the "good side" of those beautiful, ivy-covered buildings? Does that professor, the one who looks so expressive as he explains a theory, really know what he's talking about? And why are those students smiling? Are they really happy with the college or are they just posing for the picture? The best way to find the answers to these and other questions is to visit the campus.

BEFORE THE VISIT:

Plan the visit in advance. At some point you should try to visit the campus when school is in session. You get a better idea of what a college is like if you visit when students and faculty are there. You may want to plan to schedule your visit around a special event such as a lecture, a concert, or a game.

But regardless of when you visit, you should try to:

- talk to an admissions counselor
- take a tour of the campus
- attend classes
- meet with a professor in an academic area that interests you
- eat a meal in a dining hall
- talk to a coach or club advisor
- stay overnight in a campus living unit if you have time and it's possible

You should try to spend as much time as you can at the college, at least half a day.

Contact the college at least one or two weeks in advance. (The most selective colleges may require far more lead time for an interview with an admissions officer.) The college admissions officer can arrange for you to talk with an admissions counselor and take a campus tour. Many admissions officers also are willing to set up housing, classes, or other appointments you have planned. Some make overnight arrangements with their students.

Read the college's catalogues, brochures and visit their website.

Prepare a list of questions. This may sound like a lot of work, but remember - you are visiting to find out as much as you can about the school. You may want to ask general questions as well as questions that are specific to you.

If possible, bring your high school transcript with your PSAT, SAT, or ACT scores. There may be other things you wish to bring, such as a portfolio or an instrument for an audition.

Bring your parents. Parents often have questions of their own and may want to visit with you. Remember, they care about you and have an interest in what you do.

Lakota West High School recognizes the value and importance of college visits. Therefore, a limited number of days is allowed for visiting. Several days before leaving, give your assistant principal a letter from your parent/guardian giving you permission to leave. Upon returning, give your assistant principal a letter from the college confirming your visit. Be sure to advise your teachers that you will be absent. You will be responsible for making up all class assignments.

THE VISIT:

Be on time. If you will be late or have to postpone your visit, call the college as a courtesy.

Talk with as many people as you can. Meeting a variety of people will give you a more complete picture of what the college is really like.

Try to work with some free time into your schedule. Walk around the campus, go to the snack bar, talk with the students.

THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE INTERVIEW:

Again, be on time. Create a good first impression.

Relax and be yourself. Let the admissions officer see you as you really are. After all, you wouldn't want them to accept you any other way, would you?!

It's your interview, too. You don't want to dominate the interview with your questions, but remember, you are there to interview the college as well as have them interview you. A good admissions officer will understand and appreciate that fact.

Keep some of your priority questions in mind. Don't ask every conceivable question, but if there are some very important ones, be sure to ask them.

Ask about your admission chances. Have a copy of your high school transcript, PSAT/SAT/ACT score with you. Most admissions officers will be able to give you some idea of your chances of being accepted...but don't expect a definite answer. Usually that can only come later when the college has more complete information about you.

If there are important things about you or your background and achievements the Administration Office should know, be sure to mention them. Don't be bashful!

AFTER THE VISIT:

On your way home, while your thoughts are still fresh, jot down some of your impressions of the college. Save these notes for future reference.

If questions come up after the visit, don't hesitate to contact the people you have met.

Send thank-you notes to those with whom you had appointments.

Bring official confirmation of your visit to the Lakota West Attendance Office.

COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Obtain an application. Hundreds of schools will be represented at local college fairs -- College Shopping at the Mall (sponsored by Miami Middletown), Southwestern Ohio College Fair (at Miami Hamilton), and the National Association of College Admission Counselors College Fair (at the Cincinnati Convention Center). These fairs are typically held in the fall, and will be publicized through posters, announcements, and the Guidance Web Page. In addition, applications for many schools will be available in the Guidance Office starting in the fall. You can also request applications by mail (we have directories listing every school in the country), by telephone, or over the Internet.
2. Complete the application, typed or in ink. Neatness counts -- so take your time and do it right! Ask your counselor for help if you need it. If the application asks for an essay, treat it as the most important writing assignment of your career. You might ask your English teacher to edit your rough draft. **Most applications are now completed online.**
3. Most students apply during the months of October, November, and December. However, some schools have begun to accept applications during the spring of the student's junior year and over the summer. Early Decision is another possibility, in which a student pledges to attend a particular school if accepted. Check with your counselor if you would like help determining when and how to apply. When you have completed all parts of the application (except the part to be filled out by your counselor), give the completed application to our registrar, Mrs. Gaston or your counselor. Make sure you sign the application (the most common mistake) and include a check made out to the college for the application fee, if required (the second most common mistake).
4. Your counselor will complete his/her portion of the application, attach your transcript and test scores, and mail to the college. Typical turnaround time is one week. **All applications must be received in the Guidance Office two weeks before the application deadline to insure timely processing.**

5. If you apply over the Internet, you will need to give your counselor a request **in writing** to send your transcript and test scores. If there is a section of the application for the counselor to complete, you will need to print out that section and bring it to your counselor as well.
6. Your counselor will be pleased to write you a letter of recommendation if you request one. Please allow at least two weeks in order to give him/her sufficient time to write the letter that you deserve. If you ask someone else to write you a letter (teacher, activity sponsor, employer, pastor), it is your responsibility to see that your recommender submits the letter to your counselor in time to be included with your application, or to make sure that your recommender mails the letter directly to the college. It is advised that you include a completed "Senior Resume" whenever you request a letter of recommendation--see your counselor for the form.
7. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that applications are received by the deadlines established by the colleges. In general, we recommend that all applications are mailed before Winter Break. This shows the colleges that you are serious, and helps you have everything in place to meet scholarship application deadlines (which are usually after January 1).

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS
TO ASK COLLEGE ADMISSION REPRESENTATIVES**

1. Based on what you see of my credentials, what are my chances of being admitted?
2. What are the five strongest majors at your school?
3. When must I choose a major? What are the criteria for being accepted into my intended major? What happens if I am not accepted?
4. What opportunities for internships or co-op experiences are available?
5. What opportunities for extra-curricular activities are available to freshmen?
6. What percentage of students live on-campus?
7. What percentage of students leave campus on a typical weekend?
8. Are there any special visitation days for your campus?
9. Are there opportunities for study abroad?
10. Is your campus safe?
11. Can freshmen have cars on campus?
12. What deadlines do I need to know about (admission, financial aid, scholarships, housing)?
13. Do you accept Advanced Placement credit? What scores would I need?
14. What are the following percentages:

- a. % accepted from those who actually apply
- b. % receiving some sort of financial aid
- c. % of freshmen who return the following year
- d. % of freshmen who graduate in four years

15. What scholarships/financial aid opportunities are available? How do I apply?
16. What opportunities are available specifically for minority students?
17. What support systems are in place for handicapped students?
18. What tutoring/academic support services are available to all students?
19. Do I need my own computer? Are the dorm rooms wired for the Internet? Are computer labs available for students who do not have their own computers?

College Comparison Worksheet

College Name:

Location

-distance from home

Size

-enrollment

-physical size of campus

Environment

-type of school (2 yr., 4 yr.)

-school setting (urban, rural)

-location & size of nearest city

-co-ed, male, female

Admission Requirements

-deadline

-tests required

-average test scores, GPA, rank

-notification

Academics

-your major offered

-special requirements

-accreditation

-student-facility ratio

-typical class size

College Expenses

-tuition, room & board

-estimated total budget

-application fee, deposits

Financial Aid

-deadline

- required forms
- % receiving aid
- scholarships

Housing

- residence hall requirement
- food plan

Facilities

- academic
- recreational
- other

Activities

- clubs, organizations
- Greek life
- athletics, intramurals¹¹
- other

Campus Visits

- when
- special opportunities

WHAT DO COLLEGES LOOK AT?

The student's high school record usually is the most important consideration. Several things are often reviewed:

- Academic performance (overall class rank and grade point average)
- Program of study
 - type of courses taken (college preparatory?)
 - level of courses (regular, accelerated, Advanced Placement?)
 - prerequisites met for a particular college program
- Academic strength of the high school
- Senior schedule

Other factors may be considered to a lesser extent, including:

- ACT/SAT results
- School/community activities
- Exceptional achievements, academic and otherwise

-Leadership experience or potential

-Letters of recommendation

-Application essay

-Admissions interview report

-Family ties to the college

To some extent, colleges also consider the needs of the institution when they consider a candidate for admission. Most colleges and universities want a diverse student body; thus, a student's sex, race, geographic origin, or specific academic interests may be considered.

PERSONAL ESSAY - COLLEGE APPLICATION SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. How has a particular place influenced you? Don't feel limited to places of grandeur such as foreign countries. A room full of people speaking a different language, a science lab, a photo darkroom, your bedroom, a video arcade, or a stage may say something about you. Don't just describe the place. Show how it relates to you.
2. Have you ever been affected by someone or some group very different from yourself? For example, have you had the experience of being a girl on a boy's athletic team or a healthy person in a home for the terminally ill? How did the experience influence you?
3. Have you ever been in a tense, demanding, grueling, exhilarating, or frightening situation? How did you handle it? What does your response imply about you?
4. Has a particular relative, employer, friend, or neighbor influenced you? How? How are you different as a result?
5. Do you have a dream? For example, would you like to invent something as common as the toothpick, to have your artwork in a museum, or do something that will benefit mankind? Can anything stop you from achieving your dream? What does your dream imply about you?
6. Have the words of someone famous or unknown influenced you? Use the words as a starting point and show how and why they have influenced you.
7. Has an ironic turn of events worked out in your favor? For example, perhaps you learned a great lesson from someone you didn't like, or you were assigned to review films for the school paper and you can't write well, you hate films, and you really wanted to take pictures. How did the experience affect you?
8. If you know what career you want to pursue, what event or situation influenced your decision? Begin by describing the situation rather than summarizing it.
9. What is a typical day in your life? Describe only the details that convey parts of your personality. Try writing in the third person.
10. Have you ever witnessed a crime, an act of cruelty, or a charitable act? How did it

- influence you?
11. What are your activities, hobbies, grades, and dislikes? What do they say about you? Do certain activities fall into categories? Discuss yourself in terms of these qualities, using only two or three items from your list. Choose items not listed on your application.
 12. If you immigrated to this country, are there any cultural differences that have affected you? Describe specific habits or compare habits of the two countries, showing how they affected you in specific ways.
 13. Are there personal, local, or national issues that are of special interest to you? Discuss fully.
 14. Is there a philosophical, religious, or scientific question which bothers you? Does it seem to come up repeatedly in your personal experience? What is it and how is it evidenced in your daily experience? How has it shaped your beliefs?
 15. Do you have a pet peeve, a complaint, something you would like to change? What is it? What does your concern with it imply about you?
 16. What is the most difficult experience you have ever had and how did you cope with it?
 17. What high school courses have you liked most? What academic accomplishments have been most rewarding to you?
 18. Can you imagine an alternative outcome for an event in history? Describe the differences that one change would have made.
 19. What experience has helped you to discern or define a value that you hold?
 20. Which of your talents and interests would you like to develop further during your college years? Explain fully.

AVOID THE WORST MISTAKES! COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAYS

The worst essays are easy to identify. Their faults are multiple, and while an average essay may have a few of the mistakes cited here, the poorest ones are infested with them. The more of the following characteristics found in an essay, the more negatively the writer represents himself/herself.

TOO BRIEF: The essay is shallow and sounds as if it were written at the last minute.

TOO LONG: The essay is several pages, wordy, and still lacks substance.

POOR GRAMMAR: The student doesn't know how to write correctly. The essay is filled with misspellings; "sentences" are actually fragments or run-on sentences.

CONFUSED THINKING: The writer lacks direction and purpose, wandering aimlessly without making a point.

STEREOTYPICAL AND PHONEY: The writer doesn't sound sincere, writing what s/he thinks should be written.

ILLEGIBLE AND SLOPPY: The writer does not type or write neatly. These reflect little effort due to a lack of proofreading.

ESSAYS WHICH SEEM TO BE WRITTEN BY SOMEONE ELSE: These sound so professional that they are suspect.

NCAA CLEARINGHOUSE INITIAL ELIGIBILITY

Students who are considering playing sports in college at either a Division I or II school must pay close attention to the NCAA eligibility requirements.

Core course credits earned in grades 9-12 count toward a student's eligibility.

Prospective student athletes need to work closely with their high school guidance counselors throughout grades 9-12 to make sure they are taking the approved courses and are meeting eligibility guidelines and deadlines.

For more information:

- meet with your counselor
- read your Lakota Freshman School Program of Studies booklet
- Visit the NCAA Clearinghouse web site

www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

main page:

Prospective Student-Athletes- general information and forms

High School Administration- to view the list of our high school approved courses

East High School code: 363408

West High School code: 365417

Member Institutions- for school officials only

General Information