

COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE



Williamsburg High School
Morgan Capucini - School Counselor

COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

It is very important to organize yourself for the college selection process.

1. Get a folder to keep copies of all of your applications and any literature from the colleges where you apply. It is best to have a separate folder for each college inside of this file box. Ms. Capucini recommends keeping a “pro’s and cons” list of each college you are considering. There is a “College Comparison Worksheet” in this packet which should be helpful. Be sure to record all of your log in info on this document.
3. Student completes the application online. Some colleges allow you to complete the applications right on their website while others use **CommonApp**. Please know that applications can take anywhere from 15 minutes to 3 hours to complete.
4. Make sure that in your application you list your high school as Williamsburg High School - CEEB Code is 365550 - your school counselor is Morgan Capucini capucini_m@burgschools.org.
5. Request your transcript through Ms. Capucini EVERY TIME you apply to a college. If you attend WHS, write your transcript request down on the sign up sheet on Ms. Capucini’s door. If you attend Grant Career Center, you must send an email stating where you need your transcript sent to.
6. Make sure that you send your test scores to your colleges you are applying to. You can access and send your scores online at ACT.org.
7. If your application needs a letter of recommendation, please fill out the “Letter of Recommendation Request” form along with the Senior Questionnaire that can be found in this packet. Those items should be turned in to any teacher you are requesting a letter of recommendation from. DO NOT request a letter or recommendation if you do not need one. Select references wisely. Use those who personally know you, your academic record, your strengths and your accomplishments.
8. Remember to have your applications in at least one week before they are due to the college. Over 600 colleges use the Common Application for college applications. Please check with your schools of choice. **DO NOT BE LATE WITH YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION.**
9. Apply for Financial Aid on FAFSA.gov as early as October 1st.
10. Apply for Scholarships.
11. Colleges that have a rolling admission policy take anywhere from two to four weeks to get back to you. Some colleges will not respond until a certain date. Last year, UC did not send out acceptance letters until almost January, so remember to be patient. When you are accepted to a college, you must either confirm or deny your admissions.

“GOOD TO KNOW” INFORMATION

EARLY DECISION VERSUS EARLY ACTION

Early decision (ED) plans are binding — a student who is accepted as an ED applicant must attend the college. Early action (EA) plans are non binding — students receive an early response to their application. High school seniors who apply to college early—through "Early Decision" or "Early Action" programs with fall deadlines—are more likely to receive admission letters than those who apply using the regular deadlines and processes at more than 80 percent of the colleges that report such statistics.

THE ONLINE APPLICATION

MOST colleges state that the online application is the preferred method of applying since it allows for a seamless entry of student data into their computer systems and reduces errors. Following is a list of suggestions to assist students with the online application process:

1. Remember to print a copy of the online application for your records.
2. Read ALL directions carefully before beginning the process
3. Most applications allow for the creation of an account so the application can be filed in stages; others require that it be completed and submitted in one session. Allow sufficient time for either process.
5. Make certain that any required secondary school forms be printed out so you can submit them to Ms. Capucini.
6. Remember that required application fees must either be paid by a credit card online at the time of submission or that a check must be sent separately to the college through the postal mail. Without this, the application is incomplete.
7. Check to see how you will be notified that the college receives the online application. Print a copy of that verification. If verification is not received in a timely manner, you will need to follow up.

TOP TEN COLLEGE APPLICATION MISTAKES

Senior year is hectic, but don't let the frenzy affect the quality of your college applications. Take your time, pay attention to detail and plan ahead so you can meet the deadlines. Following are some of the top responses from counselors and admissions staff that shared the most common mistakes on college applications.

1. **MISSPELLINGS**—This is a big pet peeve of admissions people. If you misspell words on something as important as the application, it shows that either you don't care or you aren't good at spelling. Some students even misspell their intended major.
2. **GRAMMATICAL ERRORS**—It isn't good enough to just spell check. Proofread for

grammatical errors.

3. **WAITING UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE**—Applying the day the application is due may indicate to the admissions office that students are lazy, or that their college was not your first choice.

4. **COUNTY VS. COUNTRY?**—Read carefully. If the form asks what **COUNTY** you live in, the United States should **NOT** be the answer.

5. **LISTING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES THAT AREN'T**—Those that make the list include sports, the arts, formal organizations and volunteer work. Talking on the phone and hanging out with friends don't make the cut.

6. **NOT HITTING SUBMIT AT THE END OF THE APPLICATION** - I know it sounds silly, but it's true!

7. **REQUESTING TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE LAST MINUTE**

8. **USING AN EMAIL ADDRESS THAT FRIENDS MIGHT LAUGH ABOUT, BUT COLLEGES WON'T**—Select a professional email address. Keep your fun address for friends, but select an address using your name for college admissions.

9. **NOT CHECKING YOUR EMAIL REGULARLY**—If you've given an email address, the college will use it. You don't want to miss out on anything because you didn't read your email.

10. **LETTING MOM OR DAD HELP YOU FILL OUT YOUR APPLICATION**—Admissions people know if your parents help, whether you have two different styles of handwriting or if your admissions essay sounds more like a 45-year-old than a 17-year-old. It's fine to get advice, but do the work yourself.

WHAT A COLLEGE LOOKS FOR

It is the responsibility of the college admissions committee to assemble a freshman class that meets the requirements of its institution. As colleges and universities get more competitive for admission every year and colleges have more applicants than available space, certain criteria are established for admission. Admissions considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Strength of program (rigorous course schedule)
- Academic record (GPA)
- Standardized test scores
- School organizations and activities
- Community and volunteer activities
- Letters of recommendation
- Special interests and talents

- Diversity
- Internships and jobs
- College interview
- Portfolio
- Resume

No single factor will determine acceptance or rejection. A school desires to see the student has selected challenging courses in high school that will help the student grow academically. They want to know about interests, accomplishments, and future goals. Most importantly, a college looks at an interest in learning and a connection between what the college has to offer and what the student wants out of his education. Colleges look for students who demonstrate initiative and will be lifelong learners.

Keep in mind the more competitive colleges will expect that students will take advantage of the most competitive curricula in their schools. Students should take courses that are appropriate for them. It is better to do well in demanding college prep classes than to do excellent in lower level courses that do not challenge the student. Many colleges review a student's record to determine if the college works best for an individual's interests and abilities.

Most colleges are now asking for senior year schedules in the application process. Colleges want to make sure that students are continuing to take a strong academic schedule their senior years. Literature has documented the fact that college freshman do better their first year if they have taken tougher courses their senior year of high school which included an English, math, science, and social studies course. Many colleges are requesting senior year first semester grades to make sure the potential student is staying on track.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

When requesting a letter of recommendation, please follow these helpful hints:

1. Plan ahead to meet your deadline. Allow a week to ten days for the completion of your letter. This person possibly has other letters to be written ahead of yours. Do not request last minute recommendations and make sure the recommendation is needed.
2. Complete the Student Recommendation Form along with the Senior Questionnaire and give to recommenders.
3. Ask a teacher from one of your CORE academic classes, counselor, administrator, employer, scout master, group advisor, or clergyman/woman who knows you well and can recommend you positively.
4. Make your request personally to the one who is to write your recommendation: give a copy of your Students Recommendation Profile.

5. Inform the recommender if they will need to upload their recommendation to the Common App.
6. If it is to be sent to the sponsor: supply an addressed, stamped envelope. Do not include a return address.
7. It is recommended that you do not photocopy letters of recommendation. Current date, most recent academic data, and an original signature should be included in the recommendation.
8. Be sure to thank these individuals formally for their time and effort.
9. Always waive your rights to read letters - this means that you trust the person writing your letter to say good things about you!
10. DO NOT request a letter if your application does not need one.

COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTING - The ACT and SAT are college admission tests administered on national test dates. It is strongly recommended that students begin taking these tests 1-2 times their Junior year and then finish with in the Fall of their Senior year. Admission is based on these scores and your high school GPA in core classes. Always check with admissions offices, if you have a question about their policy on scores, class rank, or the calculation of GPAs.

ACT Test Dates for 2018-2019

Test Date	Deadline	Score Release*
Sept 8, 2018	Aug 3, 2018	Sept 18; Oct 2, 2018
Oct 27, 2018	Sept 21, 2018	Nov 6; Nov 20, 2018
Dec 8, 2018	Nov 2, 2018	Dec 18, 2018; Jan 1, 2019
Feb 9, 2019	Jan 4, 2019	Feb 19; Mar 5, 2019

SAT Test Dates 2018-2019

2018-19 SAT Test Date	Registration Date	Scores Back Date**
Saturday, November 3, 2018	October 5, 2018	November 16, 2018
Saturday, December 1, 2018	November 2, 2018	December 14, 2018
Saturday, March 9, 2019	February 8, 2019	March 22, 2019
Saturday, May 4, 2019	April 5, 2019	May 17, 2019

THE ESSAY OR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Purpose of the essay or personal statement

- Bring life to the person behind the application.
- Showcase a student's talents, achievements, experiences and points of view in ways the rest of the application cannot.
- Provide a complete picture and fill in the gaps.
- Be considered for scholarships.

General writing tips

- Write a solid introduction; this makes the reader want to continue reading.
- In the case of a short essay (200 words or less) the answer should get to the point in the first sentences, supported by well-chosen examples and a well-focused conclusion.
- Use transitions to give your essay a logical flow.
- The bulk of your essay should clearly tell the reader who you are.
- Write a conclusion that impresses upon the reader your qualifications and ties your essay together.

Reminders

- Read all instructions carefully.
- Answer the prompt!
- "Anything" means one strategically chosen topic which highlights or explains what's in the application itself.
- Avoid lists of accomplishments but focus on what these activities say about you.
- Start early and rewrite...write one draft and let it sit for a day.
- Have others review your work.
- Write in your own authentic voice.
- Be careful with humor.
- Do NOT manufacture hardship.
- Do NOT use big words to make your essay sound more impressive.

What are some things readers may be looking for?

- Thoughtful reflection: some sense of who you are.
- Personal qualities that may include: leadership, initiative, openness to growth, persistence, commitment to others, maturity, motivation.
- Meaningful participation in activities.
- Students willing to go the extra mile to enrich their education

SCHOLARSHIPS

SCHOLARSHIPS are awards of money (non-repayable) granted on the basis of student achievement. Typically, scholarship selection is based on academic excellence (GPA and standardized test scores), special talents, leadership, community service, financial need, and written or oral communication. Major sources of scholarship monies include postsecondary schools, the military, professional, business, fraternal, religious, civic, and union organizations as well as individual donors. The largest awards of scholarship money come from the individual colleges and universities. To apply to out-of-state schools, contact the financial aid office of each school for individual applications and additional information.

4 Levels of Scholarships:

** - designates scholarships that you must apply for

****National:**

These are scholarships that can be obtained at the national level - some examples include The Coca Cola Scholar Foundation. This is a wonderful fill ride scholarship, but available to all graduating seniors in the United States. These types of scholarships can be found online either on individual foundation websites or through scholarship search sites like Peterson, Cappex or Chegg.

****Local:**

These are scholarships that available at more of the local level - for example the Clermont County Bar Association gives out a scholarship every year to students graduating from Clermont County. Local Scholarships can be found online under the individual organization, through the local library or students can check in with Ms. Capucini.

****Community:**

Community scholarships are the BEST type of scholarships to apply for. These are scholarships that are GUARANTEED to go to someone in the community in which you are in, or applying to. So if you are applying for scholarships in the scholarship packet that Ms. Capucini gives out in March, these are all Community scholarships - meaning they are guaranteed to go to a Williamsburg High School student.

Community scholarships are also offered at many colleges. For example, there are scholarships at University of Cincinnati that are designated to go to incoming Freshman going into Criminal Justice. These are specific and guaranteed for a student that fits those requirements.

Merit

Merit based scholarships are where students will get the most amount of money. These are scholarships that students do not need to apply for - the student is automatically considered for the scholarship when they apply to the college. Most of these scholarships go based off of GPA/ ACT requirements. For example, at University of Cincinnati Clermont, any student who applies with a 3.5 or higher GPA and a 22 or higher composite ACT score, qualifies for a \$2,500 scholarship.

FINANCIAL AID

FASFA APPLICATION NOW OPENS UP OCTOBER 1st.

The Financial Aid application now opens earlier in order to help students have a better idea of what type of aid will be available to them as they are applying for colleges and looking towards which college will be their final decision. The form will use the most up to date tax data for you or your family.

Before beginning FAFSA check for the following items:

Do you have...

- Social Security Card - both yours and your parents
- Driver's license
- Latest W-2 and income record for student and parent
- Student's most recent Federal Income Tax
- Parent's most recent Federal Income Tax
- Most recent untaxed income records and bank statement
- Records of income from investments and business ventures
- Alien registration number or permanent residence card

QUICK REFERENCES FOR FINANCIAL AID

Cost of attendance. The total price of going to a particular college. It includes tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, meal plan, and other living expenses, such as transportation.

Demonstrated need. The difference between your expected family contribution (see below) and the total cost of attendance.

Direct PLUS loan. Federal loans available to parents or to graduate/professional students. The interest rate is higher than other loans available to undergraduate students, and borrowing limits are much higher. They're also frequently called Parent PLUS loans, and they're the only federal student loans that require a credit check.

Expected family contribution. A formula based on income, assets, and family size that estimates how much of a college's price tag you can, in theory at least, afford to pay.

Grants. Money you don't have to pay back. Grants are generally based on financial need.

Need-aware admission. A policy in which colleges consider applicants' ability to pay when admitting or rejecting them. Few colleges are completely need-aware or need-blind (see below).

Need-based aid. Money awarded to students when their family can't afford to pay the full price. Need-based aid may come in the form of grants or scholarships, but it can also be

loans with lower interest rates.

Need-blind admission. A policy in which students are accepted without regard to their financial need. Unless a college is extremely wealthy and generous with its aid, though, this can mean that a student may be accepted but not have enough money to attend.

Net price. The amount you'll actually pay for a college after tuition discounts, scholarships, and grants are accounted for. For private colleges, this is usually far less than the advertised price.

Merit aid/non-need-based aid. This is money awarded without regard to financial need. It can be based on academic achievement, artistic abilities, leadership skills, or any other characteristic.

Perkins loan. Federal loans that are reserved for low-income students. The interest rate is relatively low and the time before your first payments are due is longer than with other loan programs.

Scholarships. Money that doesn't have to be repaid. Scholarships are usually awarded based on certain characteristics or qualities of the student and can be merit-based or need-based. Colleges or individual departments offer scholarships, as do thousands of nonprofit groups, businesses, and other organizations.