

Please refer to November's newsletter if you need help narrowing down a few choices in the college selection process. It is always good to apply to at least one dream college and one safe school (sure thing). After that, do not apply to more than four to six colleges. More than eight colleges you decrease the time needed to complete each application properly and increase the cost. Once you have made your choices you are ready for the next step—the application process. Here are a few tips to aid you in this process:

Admission Criteria

A majority of Ohio colleges, even State colleges, now consider themselves as selective in their admission policy. Selectivity is the application to admit ratio, or the number of students admitted, compared to the number of students who applied. Many Ohio colleges have increased their standards, thus making getting into the college of your choice a little tougher. If your dream is to enter a particular college that is selective, then it would be wise to also apply to a college that has an open admission policy (all high school graduates are accepted). If you are not accepted into your first choice, then you will still have other options open and you have not missed financial aid opportunities. If you want to get accepted into a highly selective or selective college, then you need more than excellent grades. You have to stand out. Take leadership roles, volunteer, organize an event, excel in your field of study or win awards. Colleges may use several criteria besides ACT/SAT scores when choosing to accept an application and may choose which one or more they rank as most important when making that decision. The criteria for selection can be one or more of the following: ACT/SAT scores, G.P.A., class rank, state OGT scores, strength of high school coursework, recommendations, essay, interview, activities, sports, special skills or talent, achievements and/or awards, and grades in college classes while in high school. Colleges may check social media sites, so be smart about what you post and make sure you use the private settings. Applications can be accepted, deferred (postpone acceptance or denial until a later date), waitlisted (put on a wait list for possible opening) or denied. To estimate your college admission chance at any college and to see how to improve your odds, go to www.collegedata.com.

High School

The visual measure of your high school academic achievement is recorded in your transcript: such as class ranking, G.P.A., grades, OGT test scores, and ACT/SAT scores. Colleges look at the strength of your high school curriculum. If your grades are low, then it is not too late to bring them up. **Please note: official high school transcripts must be requested from your home school guidance department.** In addition to the transcript that is submitted with your application, colleges will request a final transcript reflecting your final grades. Check with your home school guidance department to make sure they send a final transcript. **Colleges can rescind your application if your grades slip, so stay on top of your grades.** Do not succumb to senioritis. Many schools will also consider extra-curricular activities, sports, awards, talents, and work history when making a decision to accept or reject an application. **Colleges may also request high school disciplinary records, so stay out of trouble.**

Entrance Exams

Most colleges use standardized entrance exams (ACT or SAT) for admissions. If you are a senior, you need to have taken the test by now, and juniors should take the test this year. Registration materials are available in guidance. Most state colleges will look at G.P.A. and ACT/SAT scores for acceptance into their college and acceptance into certain programs of study. **If you are on a free or reduced lunch, do not forget to see your TCTC guidance counselor for a fee waiver to take the ACT/SAT free of charge.** Most colleges also use additional institutional tests to determine college placement in English and math courses. Doing poorly on either test may mean you have to take several remediation classes before you can take the college level class you need for your major. Remedial classes will cost you not only time, but a lot of money. This is why it is so important that you take the most rigorous high school level English and math courses available. **Juniors, keep this in mind when you are scheduling your classes for next year with your TCTC guidance counselor.**

Application plans

Approximately 450 colleges offer the student the option of applying early. Two types of early admissions are "early action" and "early decision". Early action students apply to one college, and if accepted they have the option of rescinding their application. **Early decision students also apply to one college only, but if accepted, they must accept the offer.** Knowing early if you are accepted into your number one college is one of the biggest advantages of this program; however, the chance that your application is rejected is higher if you choose this option. This option puts you at a disadvantage if you change your mind. Many top colleges have opted out of the early admission program, but some have changed to a new program called "single-choice early action", where a student applies to only one college but once accepted or denied, they are free to apply for regular admissions to other colleges. Students applying early admission may have their application deferred (the college postpones the admission decision). Deferred students need to increase their chances for admission by boosting their application with improved grades and test scores. Some colleges are employing a new marketing ploy called "fast track applications", where they send applications out waiving the application fee and essay, promising an early decision. Please note that this does not guarantee admittance; it only guarantees a quick decision. Colleges with a rolling admission plan process and accept applications on a continued basis. The majority of colleges process applications using the regular decision plan where they have a established deadline and decisions are mailed before the deadline. Do not do any of the "early" options if you need to compare financial aid before you make a decision or if you need to show a beefed up transcript and need time to beef it up. Make sure you fully understand the rules before using any of these plans.

Deadlines

Know and follow the deadlines of each college you plan on attending. Missing deadlines may mean lost college or financial aid opportunities. It is best to apply well before the deadline to lessen the chance that your application gets lost in the shuffle and to assure the admission staff has more time to devote to your application. Do not apply on the last day since you run the

risk that there will be technical difficulties and it does not give you time to make sure your application counts.

Application

You can do almost all college applications online, or you can call and request that an application be sent to you; however, some colleges only accept online applications. When applying online, make sure you get a confirmation email that the college received your application. Do not find out too late that your application was never received. Close to 700 colleges in the United States use what is called the *Common Application*—one application. Review the instructions carefully before you start to complete an application. Pay attention to details. Make sure you sign and complete all of the boxes. Neatness counts. Write legibly. Do not submit your application without having someone review it for mistakes. You should have at least two other people review the application before submitting it. The number one mistake made is listing the wrong name of the college on the application, which is an easy mistake to make when doing multiple applications. This is a good time to brag about your accomplishments, but do not exaggerate. Keep it real. Include extracurricular activities. Be professional at all times including your email address. Keep a copy of your application. **If you are on a free or reduced lunch, your home school guidance counselor may be able to supply you with a fee waiver to pay for admission fees; however, not all colleges accept fee waivers.**

Personal Statement or Essay

Most colleges require a personal statement or essay as part of the application. Follow instructions carefully and stay within the required word count. This is one of the best ways for schools to evaluate you as an unique person and for you to highlight personal achievements or positive assets. Do not just list attributes or talents, but be specific and detailed. Admission officers look for enthusiasm, creativity, talent, ability to communicate, and imagination. Be yourself and be honest. Do not give inappropriate self-disclosures. Check for grammar and spelling errors. Write the essay yourself. Colleges can tell the difference between a 17 year-old high school student and a middle-aged adult parent. Have your TCTC English teacher help with your topic or review your final draft.

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation often help colleges to decide whether an applicant will be accepted or rejected. Follow the colleges' suggestions for whom you should have write your recommendations. Letters should be from an educator who knows you personally and who has had a chance to evaluate your academic work, especially if you excelled. You should choose a person who knows you personally, who can give examples of your work and character, and who can speak of your leadership abilities. Give the person writing the recommendation a profile of yourself, a resume, points you want highlighted, the deadline, and a name and address of where to send the letter. **It is recommended that you waive the right to read your recommendations.** Most colleges will consider a recommendation that is waived more reliable. **Give your writers at least three weeks to write your letter.** Check with your writers to make sure that they send your recommendation on time. Once the recommendation letter is written, send your writer a thank-you note or email a thank-you.

Resume

As part of your TCTC career portfolio, you will write a resume. Make sure you include your work experience, school and extracurricular activities, athletic activities (year and type), athletic awards, community or volunteer activities, academic honors, and awards or recognitions. Emphasize all leadership roles. Share your resume with the people who are writing your recommendation.

Interviews

The majority of colleges do not require an interview, while some give a student the option to request an interview. The interview is a great way to persuade a college to accept your application while giving you an opportunity to learn more about the college. The same rules apply for interviewing for a college as interviewing for a job: dress appropriately, be neat, arrive early, be courteous, and ask questions. Shake hands while maintaining eye contact. Sit up straight. Bring along extra copies of your resume and personal information to give to any interviewer who does not have a copy. Know the history of the college. Show interest and be positive. Be prepared to tell the interviewer about yourself, your goals, and why you want to attend this college. Thank the interviewer at the end, and follow with a personal handwritten thank-you note.

Application Checklist

- ✓ All written and typed materials submitted have the correct college name
- ✓ Cover letter
- ✓ Completed application form
- ✓ Official transcript with ACT/SAT scores sent from home school counselors
- ✓ College Prep form for selected Ohio State colleges
- ✓ Application fee
- ✓ Student resume
- ✓ Essay or personal statement
- ✓ Letters of recommendation
- ✓ Certified copies of any national exams
- ✓ Any other documents requested by the college

Note: all documents become property of the university once submitted.

Letters of acceptance or refusal

Acceptance or refusal letters usually arrive a month after their priority deadline, unless you applied early decision or early action. Many students wait for financial aid packages (which typically also arrive by the same time) before they decide which college to attend. You should notify the college in writing that you accept or decline their application offer.

Good luck in college!