

**AQUINAS ACADEMY**  
**COLLEGE COUNSELING PROGRAM**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

At the 1997 George Washington University graduation address, comedian Bill Cosby observed that whether a glass is half full or half empty depends on whether you are drinking or pouring. There is no question that the college application process can be intimidating to a high school junior or senior. But the application process can also be an opportunity: to take a big step towards determining future professional and personal success. This booklet is about this opportunity, and how to make the best of it.

Keep in mind during the application process that what you need to do is to present yourself as you really are. Many applications fail because they seem fake. Colleges are very good at discerning applicants who are trying to appear to be someone they are not. They may not accept you because you are not confident enough to present to them who you are. Besides, the more you try to sound original and different, the more you will sound like many other applicants.

The best way to show schools who you really are is by telling the colleges about what you love. It is in this regard that your college counselor is helpful. Your job is to show colleges who you are on a few pieces of paper. Your counselor's job is to put himself in the shoes of the college admission officers, and to ask himself: "Would I admit this applicant?" The two of you together will then be able to present you to the colleges in the most attractive possible way.

You will need to work with teachers, counselors, administrators and colleges. College applications are therefore in many ways similar to the kind of projects that most professionals face on a daily basis:

In order to accomplish this job, you need to set a course of action, including goals and methods: decide where to apply (goals) and set up a calendar (methods).

You need to take care of some of the projects personally: obtaining applications, taking exams, writing essays, filling out the applications.

Throughout the process you will be seeking advice from other people in each one of these areas: counselors, preparatory courses, parents.

You need to delegate some of the tasks, such as recommendations and secondary school reports, for which you are nonetheless responsible. Delegation rids you of the work the task requires, but not the responsibility of getting it done.

With these things in mind, it is clear that the college application process is a valuable learning experience, even if a student does not plan to attend college immediately.

Finally, before jumping into the specific concerns of the application process, you might find it helpful to put yourself briefly in the shoes of the Directors of Admissions of the colleges to which you will apply. They have a very difficult task ahead of them: to admit all the students they need to admit, no more and no less, and to make sure that they admit the right kinds of

students. If they admit more than they can take, they will have insufficient space for them. If they admit less, they will lose money. Unless they admit the right kind of students ---- those who are going to do well academically and socially ---- they will not have happy people on campus, and more importantly, they will be less likely to have happy and successful graduates who will support their alma mater. If you do your homework and learn about the schools to which you are applying, you will know when you are the right applicant to the college. Directors of Admissions have a problem. You can be the solution to their problem. Your application is your way to prove it to them.

## **II. INITIATING THE PROCESS**

### **1. *Where to apply?***

#### **i. Two Questions:**

There are two obvious but worthwhile questions which should be answered when considering possible colleges:

Do I want to go to school here for four years?

Do I want to live here for four years?

As opposed to high school, you will probably not be going home at the end of the school day in college. In fact, you may stay on campus for months at a time. Some students are attracted to a college in the abstract, because of academics, athletics, appearance, etc., and they fail to consider the importance of the fact that this is going to be their home for the next four years.

You probably will not reach an answer to any of these questions until you visit the colleges, but it is still worthwhile to keep them in mind from the very beginning of the application process.

#### **ii. Three Tiers:**

You should apply to schools in each one of these categories:

Reach schools: (one or two long shots): Do not worry if you do not think you will be accepted into these schools, as long as there is a chance. These are the schools you would like to attend if everything went your way. The very top schools are often expensive, but they can be a good investment.

Probable schools: (Three or four): Schools where you think you have a good chance of being accepted and which you would like to attend. These schools provide a good education, and they may give you a generous financial aid package for the simple reason that you are qualified.

Likely schools: (One or two sure things): Think about likely schools both in terms of academics and finances. There is no sense in having a \$150,000 likely school, for most people, unless you have been promised a full ride. Look for likely schools among your local state universities.

#### **iii. Factors to Consider**

The following are factors to consider when choosing a college:

1. Money: Can you afford it? Is it worth the expense?
2. Distance: How far away from home do you want to be? Do you want to go home daily, on weekends, every break, or only for Christmas and summer?
3. Location: Urban or country, north or south, coastal or inland, mountains or plains?

4. Climate: Hot, cold, humid, etc.
5. Living arrangements: What are the dorms like? Cafeteria? Is campus housing guaranteed? Can you move off campus if you want to?
6. Where your friends will go: Some people want to start all over again by making new friends, and therefore want to attend a college nobody else from their school is attending. Others want to make sure that they already know a few people when they arrive at college.
7. What your parents think: A couple of good reasons to really listen to them in this matter: they know you better than anyone else (yes, better than you know yourself), they want what is best for you and they are most likely paying for your education.
8. What your guidance counselor, and/or teachers think: They do not know you as well as your parents, but they also want what is best for you and they have professional expertise to help determine what colleges might be good for you.
9. School size: Small—less than 5,000 students; Medium—between 5,000 and 15,000; Big—over 15,000.
10. Academics: Specific programs that you like and general strengths that match yours.
11. Will the school allow you to fulfill a musical, artistic, or athletic talent, e.g. you want to play a varsity sport or perform in the school band. Do not forget that no matter how badly you want to play a sport, you will have to live there, and you will need your education to lay the groundwork for the next step in your life. You only have four years of eligibility for a varsity sport, but you have another sixty years after that for which to prepare.

#### **iv. Irrelevant Factors**

Some factors which are not as important as people often think they are:

1. Student/Faculty ratio and Average Class Size:
  - Most introductory courses are large, but the further you go in your major the smaller the classes will become.
  - Big courses taught by brilliant professors are better than small courses taught by first year graduate students.
  - Small classes may force you to do your reading, but on the other hand, you will also spend an inordinate amount of time listening to your classmates' opinions—for which you don't want to pay—and not enough listening to your professor's—for which you have paid quite a bit.
2. Course catalogs: course titles are meaningless. It is the professor matters.
3. Faculty credentials: degrees are not as important as the professor's accessibility and ability to convey his knowledge.
4. Viewbooks: are promotional materials. Their function is to make a school look attractive.

5. SAT averages: are averages only—not a cut off line. Probably about half the students accepted were below that average.

## 2. College Visits

Visit the school before you apply it. You would not buy a house without first seeing it, going in, walking through the rooms and getting a feel for it. College is a large investment of time, effort, and money. You must have a reasonable expectation that you will like it there before committing yourself to attending. Visiting schools will save you the hassle of applying to a college and later discovering that you do not want to go there.

Before you visit, call the admissions office and make an appointment to meet a representative. Do not show up and ask for an interview. It is rude and at best fruitless—at worst a strike against you.

Find out if you can take a tour of the campus when you visit. Ask for information on this when you call to make an appointment.

Try to set up an interview with a professor of the department you are most interested in. Professors often enjoy talking to prospective students.

Attend a class or two.

Talk to the students. Students often like it if you stop them in the quad or go to them in the cafeteria and ask them their opinion about the school. They often have good information on the school, and even tips on how they got accepted.

As you conduct your visit, ask yourself questions about the following:

- Academics: Challenging but not overwhelming?
- Extracurriculars: How many? How involved are the students?
- Environment: Location, climate . . .
- Social life: Will you fit in? Is it too wild? Is it too mild?

If you want to go to one school more than any other, visit. Be ready to tell them why you want to go to their school since it may affect their decision-making process. Some selective colleges will give preference to a student who visits over one who does not.

Ask your guidance counselor if he knows any alumni from Aquinas Academy who are attending or recently graduated from the school. Ask him if you could give them a call to talk with them about their impressions of the school.

### **III. THE ADMISSIONS DECISION**

#### **1. Tangibles**

##### **i. Grades and Courses**

The best way for admissions officers to know that you will be able to handle the work is for them to see your high school grades. The later grades are more important than the earlier so it is not too late if you had a bad first year to raise your GPA. Of course, do not stop working if you had a good first year.

Colleges want to see that you are taking a heavy load of courses and that you are doing well in them. Very selective colleges want to see that you took the most challenging program offered. In any case, all schools want to see motivation and academic ability.

Do not stop working second semester of your senior year. Colleges sell all of your grades, and they reserve the right to reject an already accepted applicant because of a sharp decline in performance senior year. More importantly, you want to make sure that you are at your best when you enter college, and the best way to ensure this is to maintain your study habits going into and through college.

##### **ii. PSAT, SAT, SAT II**

###### **PSAT:**

Aquinas Academy offers PSAT at school in October of your sophomore and junior years. Take it as practice for the SAT, and also because National Merit Scholarships are based on the junior year PSAT results. Colleges will only see your PSAT scores if you are a National Merit Scholar.

###### **SAT:**

Take the SAT exam in the Fall or Spring of your junior year.

If you need one, take an SAT Preparatory course during the summer before your junior year. It will help you towards the PSAT exam as well. You may not need a course if you have the discipline to prepare for the SAT on your own.

You do not want to take the SAT more than three times—you will appear too greedy.

There are more than 20 points between 590 and 610. Take it again if you have a good chance to make it into the next set of hundreds.

Take only once if you are a horrible test taker. If you score a 310 verbal the first time, to get a 320 the second time is not going to make you a more attractive candidate. Although not as common as the SAT, colleges also accept the ACT. If you perform below your ability in the SAT, you may want to look into taking the ACT instead.

Take it only once if you did extremely well the first time that you took the test. Extremely well is if you got over 700 on both halves of the test.

Colleges pay slightly more attention to verbal score than math—unless you indicate that you want to be a math or science major.

Many colleges say they will only use your best scores. However, they see all of your scores, and although they try not to let this affect their judgment, it is reasonable to think that it does. Most colleges take your best individual Math score and your best individual Verbal score. Some will take your best set of scores from one test date.

If your scores are low, do not try to explain why they are so. Admissions officers have heard all kinds of explanations and they are extremely skeptical about excuses. The only thing you will accomplish will be to draw attention to your scores.

If your scores are low because of an objective reason, then have your college counselor explain why to the college. But it had better be a very good reason; otherwise you are better off not saying anything.

### **SAT II (subject tests):**

Find out if the colleges you are applying to require the SAT II. If they do, they will probably require three of them.

Aim at taking all three one-hour exams on the same test date during the Spring semester of your junior year or Fall semester of your senior year.

Because SAT II tests are given on the same dates as the SAT test, you do not want to use too many dates on SAT II's.

If the colleges you are applying to do not specify which subject tests they want, then you should take the English, math, and either a science, history, or a language.

High SAT II scores can redeem low SAT I scores.

### **iii. Applications**

If using a typewriter instead of a computer, make a copy of the application and then type everything onto the copy first to see how things fit before typing on the application you will send.

Make sure your final application is neat and clean. It is worthwhile to request another application and wait an additional two weeks rather than sending one that looks like a five year old put it together with crayons.

Every part of the application should be typed unless it states otherwise.

Early is better than late. The earlier you submit your application, the better chance you have of being accepted. Competitive colleges receive thousands of applications for early admission by late August. An admissions officer may review 40 or so regular applications in September, but 400 a month in December through February—you will receive a better and more favorable review early rather than late.

**Intended Major:** be sure that the college you are applying to has the major you write down—offering a course in the subject is not the same as offering a major in it.

Do not specify your major in an area that you are not outstanding in.

**Undecided:** applying undecided is not a disadvantage—it is better than saying pre-law, pre-med or business unless applying to a competitive business school.

**Intended career:** undecided is the best. Colleges prefer to work with people who have not decided what they want to do over the next fifty years. Law and medicine are the worst—too common and you make college look like a stepping stone and nothing else (they will think that as soon as you are accepted you will already be dying to get out). Almost as bad is to say that you want to “work with people” or “help people” (to vague or fake).

**Travel** is a plus. Colleges like people who are well-traveled. Make sure to mention if you paid for your own traveling or at least for part of it, and how you earned the money.

Stay away from common applications if a school offers its own. These common applications are easier to do and less time consuming. You show less interest in the specific college when you use the common application. After all, you are already telling the college that at best they are one among many, and not your first choice.

Try to fit everything in the space they allow you within the application. If you absolutely need more space, type “see attached” and attach a good quality paper page to your application. Write down name, social security number, and the whole question before you fill in this additional page. But remember that admissions officers have a lot of paper to read.

Make a copy of everything before you send it.

#### **iv. Essays**

Begin your essays during the summer before your senior year. Colleges rely heavily on essays in admission decisions. The more time you can spend on them the better.

The point of your essay is twofold: first, to show that you are a decent writer, and second, that you are a responsible, mature person.

Do not use your essay to apologize for the weak spots on your application.

Submit extra materials if they are called for, but do not flood the office with unrequested materials—they have a lot of papers to go through as it is.

Write about something you care about. Even if they give you the topic, look for something you care about regarding that topic.

In general, avoid travel essays: they are hard to read and do not usually yield many insights.

Do not try to describe all your interests and activities.

The following are some ideas regarding topic selection and general approach to your essay:

1. Do not repeat information from other parts of your application: use your essay to expand on an interesting aspect of your application that you only had a chance to mention earlier, or to bring out some outstanding quality or achievement that you could not include anywhere else.
2. Avoid generalities: try to talk about specific things that happened to you at specific times. One good way to avoid generalities is to talk about people. People are much more interesting than theories, ideas, ambitions, etc. People represent, and even more, they incarnate, all these theories, ambitions, ideals, etc.
3. Be humorous if you can, but be very careful. Once again you are better off showing your true self instead of trying to sound like someone else.
4. Maintain the right tone: respectful, witty, informal, and spontaneous. Your essay should read like a good conversation if read aloud. Do not force it. Be yourself.

Avoid the following themes:

1. Any topic that is very personal, but which is relatively common: your relationship with your girlfriend, a classmate who was killed in a car accident, your personal philosophy, the “best game of my life” or similar athletic essays, how much you love yourself, etc.
2. Any topic that might be divisive, and give the reader a reason to dislike you, your political views, your religious beliefs, etc.
3. Any topic that might possibly present you as a poor college prospect: how much you like to party, the first time you got drunk or any time after that, how much psychotherapy has changed your life, the pleasure you derive from drugs, or how much you hate studying.
4. Any topic that you think should be written about for the good of humanity: the evils of drugs, the importance of a college education, large plans for changing the world or trendy topics such as ethnic cleansing or the preservation of the ozone layer.

In general, avoid any topic that you do not care about, but that you think the admissions officers should care about, and any topic that you care about, but nobody else does, not even your closest friends.

Ask yourself what you want to write about.

Ask yourself if others—admission officers—want to hear about this.

If the topic can be illustrated using a person, be as specific as possible; write about people who are relevant to you personally, and not those relevant to the general public.

Think about the form you might use. Straight prose is fine, but if your theme lends itself to another approach, try it, but remember it has to be very good so as not to appear pedantic.

Write drafts. Set them aside for 24 hours and reread them to spot clichés, triteness, vagueness, dullness, grammatical errors and misspellings. Do not use uncommon words merely to sound educated, and stay away from quotations. Make sure the draft is typed: the essay becomes more impersonal and it is easier to critique.

Does the essay focus on your theme? Does it ramble? Is it confusing? Is it boring? Remember that good writing is writing that is easily understood. Do not say what you are going to say, simply say it.

Does the introduction grab the reader's attention? Remember that your essay is one among thousands.

Ask someone whose opinion you trust to read your essay and give you feedback. Ask that person the same specific questions you asked yourself when looking at your draft.

Review your essay for typos, spelling and grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, inaccurate usage, unnecessary words, or anything else that does not sound right to you. Read your essay out loud to locate rough spots. Have a good writer critique your essay, have a good speller proofread it.

Make sure your essay looks physically attractive and that the print is easy to read. You will have a friendlier reader that way.

## **v. Extracurricular Activities**

Colleges want students who are capable of doing the work. They also want students who are interesting and thus will contribute to the atmosphere of the school. They judge how interesting students are by looking at their extracurricular activities.

Quality and commitment are much more important than quantity. Colleges do not want to see someone who does everything minimally. They want to see someone who sticks with things long enough to rise to a position of leadership and responsibility.

In fact, you do not want to pad your application with an extremely long list of activities. You should list the activities in accordance with the importance they have for you and the importance you think they will have for the college.

Examples of activities that look impressive on an application, especially if you held a position of leadership in them: debate, choir or orchestra, varsity sport, community service activities or organizations, and anything unusual that took a lot of time and effort.

Three factors to consider when listing extracurricular activities on your application:

1. Show commitment and leadership: Activities that show you have the respect of your peers are the best way to demonstrate leadership. That means you need activities that bring you into contact with your peers.
2. Explain those which are not obvious: Be straightforward about what you did and the different activities in which you participated. Do not try to make them sound more impressive than they are.

3. Skip those you only participated in minimally or which were not important to you. They only distract from those which are significant.

An after school job is not a disadvantage. There are good reasons to have a job, such as you need to earn money for your family (everyone will respect a teenager who has the maturity to work because his family relies on him to bring in some income), or you are working at an interesting place that is going to make you into a more interesting human being and therefore more qualified for admission. In any case, colleges will want to see that you bring in the same sense of leadership and commitment to your job as to your other extracurricular activities.

## **vi. Recommendations**

Be prompt: teachers are busy.

Who to pick for recommendations: teachers who know you and like you, who are in fields where your principle interest lies, who are good writers, and if possible and appropriate, who are alumni of the college you are applying to.

Fill out the top part of the recommendation form, sign the waiverline—colleges are suspicious when a student does not sign the waiver since the recommender has no guarantee of confidentiality—and give it to your teacher with a stamped, properly addressed envelope.

Send a cover letter to the teacher, thanking him, underlining the date the recommendation is due, and asking him to keep copies in case you need him to send it to more colleges.

Attach a resume listing accomplishments to refresh the teacher's memory: career interests, hobbies, classes you took with that teacher, and any other information.

Send thank you notes: you should be truly thankful because they are helping you, and it takes time to write the recommendations. It is also a polite way to remind a teacher to do it.

As the deadline approaches, call the teacher to politely ask him if he has sent the recommendation. Thank him for his help.

Do not submit too many extra recommendations: once again, admissions officers have a lot of papers to read, and they generally do not look favorably on unrequested materials.

If you decide to submit extra recommendations, it is better if they are written by unknown people who know you well, rather than by well-known people who do not know you.

## **vii. Interviews**

When visiting a college, make sure to call ahead of time to set up an interview with someone at the admissions office. Never show up unannounced and inquire about an interview.

Be on time, neatly dressed and well groomed. If you must be late, be sure to call ahead of time.

Rehearse questions to yourself about GPA, SAT scores, summer/year employment, your school, extracurriculars, goals, and why you are interested in the college.

Answer questions to the best of your ability, but relax, do not be afraid to admit that you do not know something. Your interviewer wants to see that you carry yourself well, that you have a clear and analytical mind, and that you are ready to learn.

Be prepared to take some initiative in mentioning things you want to emphasize. Carry your half of the conversation, and do so with enthusiasm.

Ask questions about the college that demonstrate knowledge and a sincere desire to learn more. Ask about housing, internships, study abroad, and questions that show you have looked at the curriculum and majors.

Explain discrepancies in your applications: why you did not take some class, or the good reasons for certain grades you received.

Explain relevant items that would not fit into the application, such as family background.

Do your homework: do not ask questions that are answered in the general brochure—they show you are ignorant of easily known fact about the college. In general, you should be applying to schools that you are interested enough in attending that it comes through that you know as much as you could find out about them.

As much as possible, save the best for last: start interviewing with the schools in your likely or probable range, and save the reach school for last. This way you will be best prepared for it.

Make sure you send a thank you note to your interviewer or any other school administrator whom you talk. It is polite, and keeps your name in front of them.

## **2. Intangibles**

The tangibles in your application (GPA, SAT's, etc) will show the college what type of candidate you are. The application reader will ultimately decide whom he likes best according to intangibles in the application: overall impression of the candidate, whether he is the kind of student the college is looking for, what kind of person will the college contribute to the work force if it admits this candidate.

Rule-changing attributes: attributes that might change the ratings and help you to be accepted over more qualified applicants are: geographical location, special skill, legacy—son of alumnus or faculty—all may be something the school is looking for.

Minorities: compete against applicants from the same minority instead of all the other applicants.

Special skill: a good musician might get in if he is qualified for admission and the band director is looking for someone who plays a certain instrument.

Sports: if you would play for a team from the beginning and contribute to that team, then you should be accepted as long as you meet the minimum qualifications. The college contacts most of these candidates once they apply, and in some cases the college even encourages them to apply. If you play a sport but would not contribute from the beginning, you will enter a pool with all the other applicants who can do the same job. If you do not get in from that pool, then you enter the general pool with all the other applicants to the college.

Physical disability: mention in the application. Be sure to attach a doctor's statement.

Unusual background: a plus. It is also helpful if you have a name that will bring good publicity to the school.

Early Decision: it depends on the school, although it helps for most. Schools are interested in having a high yield of acceptances—students that attend the school when accepted. You are making their Spring admission process easier for them. Because of that, they will give you a break. Some of them receive so many early admission applications that the percentage accepted is as slow as the percentage of regular admission acceptances.

Financial aid: even among need-blind colleges, it might make a difference when deciding between two people who are otherwise equally matched if they learn from other parts of the application that one of the candidates' family has money and is willing to spend it in the school.

After the admission decisions are made, but before sending the acceptance letters out, the admissions office will review the incoming freshman class to look for two things. First, is there a right male – female distribution? Second, is it sending the wrong message to some high school? Is it admitting a lower-rated candidate—at least on paper—and rejecting a higher one from the same school? Is there a good reason to do that?

### **III. FINANCIAL AID**

#### **1. Introduction**

Your college education will cost approximately \$150,000. Somebody will have to pay this sum—either you, your parents, the college, the taxpayers or some scholarship-granting organization. How much you pay will partly depend on how professionally you approach the application process.

In your initial search, do not rule out a college because of cost. The Free Application for Federal Students Aid form (FAFSA) will determine how much you are expected to pay—your family contribution—not how much you will pay.

A financial aid package will be a combination of:

- a. Grants or scholarships which do not have to be repaid.
- b. Loans which have to be repaid, usually after you leave school.
- c. Work usually provided by the university.

Ask for financial aid information from the colleges themselves. Because of stiff competition among top colleges, some of them are coming up with innovative ways to defray costs. Read the literature carefully.

When putting together the list of colleges that you are going to apply to, you need to add a couple of financial safety schools. These are schools that are cheap enough that you can afford them or schools that you know want you so much that they will give you all of the aid that you need.

The decision to go into debt should be made carefully. You need to determine how you are going to pay back the debt after graduation. This is especially true if you are almost sure that you are going to attend a graduate program afterwards. At the same time, the quality of the school may make it worth your while to incur some debt.

#### **2. How Financial Aid Works:**

All colleges use the FAFSA, which is the only form used by state schools. In addition, many private colleges use the PROFILE form from the Education Testing Service (ETS) or some version which they create for their own use. This form will determine the size of your “family contribution”—how much the college thinks your family can pay for your college education. If the college is “need blind”—most colleges are—then the college will offer you a financial aid package to fill-in the gap between the family contribution and the college sticker price.

The PROFILE form is intrusive in its questions; it is similar to a tax return. You should be careful in filling out this form, because it will determine how much you are expected to contribute.

There are many other sources of aid. But you must remember that the constant is your family contribution. Colleges will sometimes use any other aid that you receive to diminish what the college gives you, not what you are going to contribute to your education. It is worthwhile to receive outside sources of aid, but not always wise to devote a lot of time to seeking them.

Not all offers are the same, even if they promise the same amount of money: how much of it is in grants, how much is in loans and the interest on these loans should also be considered.

### **3. Unusual sources of aid:**

AP exams: by placing out of required classes and earning credit, some students finish their college education in three years, thus saving up to \$35,000 by receiving a year's worth of college credit through AP examinations.

PSAT: money is available by becoming a National Merit scholar.

ROTC: can offer as much as free tuition, room, board, and books. Check out these programs as early as junior year.

Colleges themselves: always talk to them and ask them for help.

Talent-based scholarships: music, art, etc.—either offered by the college or independent groups.

## **IV. CALENDAR**

### **FRESHMAN YEAR:**

1. Set up a list of courses you want to take as preparation for college: core courses—English, math, science, history, language—AP, honors, and courses of personal interest. All your grades count from now on.
2. Set up a list of extracurricular activities, including sports, for the school year as well as the summer.
3. Consider a study skills course.
4. Summer reading list.
5. Investigate summer programs or jobs.

### **SOPHOMORE YEAR:**

1. Update list of course and extracurricular activities for rest of high school.
2. Check on possibilities of taking AP and honors courses.
3. Take PSAT
4. Take SAT Preparatory Course during the summer if possible.

### **JUNIOR YEAR:**

#### September:

1. Buy desk calendar to note important dates and set your own targets for action.
2. Set aside desk drawer or file for college application materials: catalogues, papers, copies of documents, receipts and notes of phone calls.
3. Attend College Night at Aquinas Academy.

#### October:

4. Take PSAT
5. Make sure you know your social security number.

#### December:

6. Make up a preliminary list of colleges you would like to attend. Have some colleges in each of the categories: reach, probable, likely.
7. Request information from all colleges in your preliminary list. Politely ask for and write down the name of the person you talked to in the admissions office. It makes for easier follow up. Keep a record of any “action” on a piece of paper. Keep a piece of paper for each college on your preliminary list. Keep a folder for each one of these colleges in your desk drawer or file folder.
8. Start looking for a good summer job. Christmas break is a good time to do this.

### February:

9. Through school guidance counselor and college Financial Aid offices, begin educating yourself about financial aid possibilities.
10. Look into ROTC programs if you are interested.

### March – April:

11. Take SAT 1 exam.
12. Try to visit as many colleges in your preliminary list as possible.
13. Identify teachers, counselors and employers for possible letters of recommendation.
14. Try to attend at least one college fair.

### May:

15. Take AP examinations.
16. Read local newspapers to find out what local, civic, and cultural organizations give financial aid to graduating seniors.

## **SUMMER BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS**

1. Work on essays by looking at the college's application from the previous year or this year's.
2. Visit more colleges.
3. Prepare personal resume to give to teachers when asking for recommendations.

## **SENIOR YEAR:**

### September:

1. Ask for and review all applications forms. Some applications have two parts where you need to send in Part I and get Part II.
2. SAT? The deadline for the October SAT is in early September.
3. SAT II's? Check with colleges you are applying to regarding which tests they require.
4. Work hard in school. Colleges will look at your most recent grades first.

### October:

5. Ask teachers for recommendations.
6. Check for financial aid opportunities: school counselor, library, private groups, state, federal, and local programs.

### November:

7. Fill out applications for Early Decision.
8. Give secondary school report forms to Mr. Burchill's office..

December:

9. Fill out FAFSA and other financial aid forms—check deadlines.
10. Complete essays.
11. Start looking for a good summer job.

January:

12. Traditional deadline for applications to most competitive colleges. Photocopy applications before typing or printing in computer for practice. Always type the application even if they give you a choice. Keep a copy of everything you send to the colleges.

March:

13. Prepare for the AP examinations in all your courses.

April:

14. Carefully review financial aid notices from colleges. Look at how much of your need is covered, not how much they offer.
15. Ask for advice if you have to put down a non-refundable deposit before you hear from all colleges.

May:

16. If wait-listed by a college: call, visit, and write. Ask what else you can do. Perhaps they will consider additional recommendations.
17. AP exams.

June:

18. Accept financial aid awards.

## Note

Keep working throughout the Spring semester to improve your strengths as a student and a young adult. Do not waste the semester. Deepen your reading. Obtain a part-time job if possible. Concentrate on reading, writing, critical and analytical thinking. Spring semester grades can be instrumental to you if you have been wait-listed by any college.

### For Information Contact:

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