

- I. Lace Up Your Running Shoes- start early and work not to be overwhelmed ☺
 - a. Meet with Guidance Counselor as early as 1st Semester Junior year.
- II. National Merit Scholarship Program- Juniors: register for PSAT being held in October.
 - a. Timeline:
 1. October Junior year take test
 2. December students receive results.
 3. September 2018, high scorers qualified as Semifinalists.
 4. February 2019, semifinalists who meet academic and other requirements will advance to Finalist standing and about ½ of them will win a scholarship- either a \$2500 National Merit Scholarship or a merit scholarship of typically \$500-\$2000 sponsored by a college, university, or corporation due to their finalist status.
 - b. Currently, about 250 corporations, company foundations, businesses and approximately 190 colleges and universities provide National Merit Scholarships. Colleges are very interested in students who are National Merit Semifinalists. Each year colleges and universities support about 3900 Merit Scholarship awards for Finalists. The ivies, Stanford, and other highly selective colleges do not participate in the program.
- III. Spend Time on College Board Website
 - a. Have student take survey about type of college/environment/course of study interested in to generate a list of colleges/universities as starting point.
- IV. Attend College Fair
 - a. Spotsylvania Mall College Night is Wed. October 17 6:30-8:30pm with 100+ institutions represented. Great opportunity to collect literature and speak with Admissions people.
- V. Start a College Spreadsheet
 - a. Spend time on Websites of Colleges/Universities recommended on College Board and those know student is interested in.
 1. Note merit scholarship opportunities and their deadlines. Deadlines to be considered are often EARLIER than regular decision application deadlines.
 2. Note any Early Action and Regular Decision deadlines. Early Action is not binding, Early Decision IS.
- VI. Start a Student Resume
 - a. How does your student look on paper? How are leadership and community service categories? Not too late to be intentional about strengthening these categories Junior year. Colleges looking for well rounded.
 - b. Document all high school award and participation certificates- keep organized in a file.
- VII. Sources of Merit Scholarships
 - a. High School Guidance Office
 1. *Seek Master List of outside scholarships promoted at the high school.
 - a. Print and spend time highlighting those that your student may qualify to apply for.
 2. Frequent the office for paper copies made available – changes often.

- b. Local newspaper's edition highlighting high school Valedictorian/Salutatorian and scholarships awarded. Research the scholarships that were awarded.
 - c. Your Employer, Bank, Church, Chamber of Commerce, PTA, Organizations you belong to
 - d. Books (College Financial Aid for Dummies)
- VIII. College Visits Beginning Junior Year
- a. "Demonstrated Interest" – make an APPOINTMENT for tour and admissions interview.
 - 1. Some schools take into consideration for merit aid that you came to the school.
 - 2. Most schools for merit aid require an admissions interview
 - 1. Send thank you note.
- IX. College Applications
- a. Cast a wide net – merit based aid is very competitive.
 - 1. Save essays – you may be able to use or tweak to use more than once.
 - b. Don't overlook the Privates –many have generous endowments and offer significant aid.
- X. College Scholarship Competition Weekends
- a. When researching merit aid offered on college websites, if school utilizes a scholarship competition weekend, research WHEN that weekend will be for student's senior year and pencil in your calendar.
 - 1. Students invited to competition weekends MUST attend on specified date else be disqualified from consideration.
 - b. Have student hone interview skills using sample scholarship review questions and answer tips from the internet.
 - 1. Remind student to elaborate on answers.
 - 2. Student should always ask questions – will express interest!
 - 3. Send thank you note.
 - c. Have student watch scholarship interview videos on youtube including panel interviews.
- XI. Many Local Scholarship Opportunities are in the busy Spring Semester of Senior Year
- a. Make list of scholarships and due dates Jan.1 forward and post on the refrigerator to stay on track!
- XII. Final Notes
- a. Confessions of a Scholarship Winner by Kristina Ellis

Why Interview?

You should always choose to interview, if possible. College admissions officers want to know each applicant as well as they possibly can before making the weighty decisions about which applicants to admit, and by interviewing, you can accomplish much. Conversely, if you are going to invest the considerable time (and money) to apply somewhere, you'll want to know that it's a place worth applying to. In the best cases, YOU interview the college at the same time that the admissions officer interviews you.

The interview provides an opportunity to:

- Ask questions of the college concerning academic programs, study abroad, the social landscape, etc.
- Explain an academic challenge that your transcript reveals.
- Speak with enthusiasm about your greatest passions.
- Provide context for various choices you've made (such as dropping a class, breaking a rule, doing community service, etc.).
- Showcase your delightful personality.
- Make a memorable, favorable impression.

General Rules of Thumb

- Call colleges at least a few weeks in advance of your visit to inquire about interviewing. Many colleges fill their interview slots early. Ask if it is possible to schedule your interview with the admissions officer who reads files from your geographic area (you will need to ask if they read applications by school or by home zip code). If there are no more on campus interviews available, ask about alumni interviews.
- Even if you cannot interview, be sure to stop by the admissions office to pick up information, take a tour, and give your name to the receptionist; this is a simple way of "demonstrating interest."
- Allow plenty of extra time to get to the interview. Tardiness detracts from your ability to make a good first impression.
- Try to schedule your first interview at a safety school (but not a school where you know you'd never apply). This will enable you to do a practice run where the stakes aren't as high.
- Bring copies of your college resume and transcript. Your interviewer may or may not want to look at them; however, you should always offer them. [View a sample resume here.](#)

Making a Good Impression

- Maintain eye contact.
- Be conscious of your posture; sit up straight.
- Listen actively.
- Show enthusiasm (about yourself, the conversation, and the institution where you're interviewing).

- Answer with openness and honesty.
- Frame your responses positively. (If you are describing a challenging situation, focus on the positive growth, how much you learned, not the foolish decision you made.)
- Answer specifically and concisely; try to avoid the pitfalls of “chickspeak” (“like,” “you know,” “cool,” “umm”...)
- Have ready two or three specific, intelligent questions about the college (not “do you really have to do the math core requirement here?”). Instead, look at current news and program information on their web site and ask specific questions such as “I noticed that Dr. Bang just received a grant from NASA for his rocket fuel project; will there be an opportunity for undergraduates to work on this project? In general, how are undergraduates chosen for research projects in the science department?”
- Dress comfortably and dress to make your interviewer comfortable. Avoid revealing your midriff, cleavage, underwear. The interview is a formal occasion for an informal conversation; dress respectfully so that the interviewer is not distracted by your appearance.
- Students who control the direction of the conversation stand out. Before you even get to the interview, think about what aspects of yourself you want to highlight; try to move the conversation in those directions.
- Be yourself, be yourself!

A Word for Parents

College admissions officers assume that where a student goes to college is her own decision; they are generally not interested in speaking with parents beyond a quick hello at the end of the interview. Parents should be prepared to sit in a waiting area with a book or wander around during the interview.

Sample Interview Questions

1. Why are you considering this college?
2. What makes you think that this college would be a good match?
3. Where else are you applying and why?
4. What do you hope to major in?
5. What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?
6. How do you define “success?”
7. What have you liked or disliked about your school? What would you change?
8. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
9. What newspapers and magazines do you read?
10. What books not required for school have you read recently?
11. What television shows do you watch?
12. Tell us about your family.
13. How do you spend a typical afternoon after school? Evening? Weekend?
14. What extracurricular activities have you found most satisfying?
15. What are your strengths? Weaknesses? What has been your proudest achievement so far?
16. If you could talk with any one living (or deceased) person, whom would it be and why?
17. What events have been crucial in your life?
18. What is the most important thing you’ve learned in high school?

19. What mark do you feel you've left on your school?
20. What do you want to get out of your college experience?
21. What about you is unique? What could you contribute to our college community?
22. Talk about a significant challenge you have encountered.
23. Is there anything you'd like to tell us about your transcript?
24. What is your greatest passion?
25. How would your friends describe you?
26. If you had high school to do over again, what might you have done differently?
27. What are your goals for your senior year?

After the Interview

You should try to gather as complete an impression as possible during your campus visit. Either before or after the interview, wander around absorbing the campus' "feel."

- Pay special attention to the library, campus bookstore, housing units, and any facilities that fit your special area of academic and extracurricular interest.
- Read the student newspaper. Try to find other student publications—department newsletters, alternative newspapers, literary reviews.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what day-to-day student life is like.
- Eat in the cafeteria.
- Visit the student union. Approach students and ask them about their experiences at the school; most students are pleased to be able to talk about their colleges.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.

IMPORTANT: When you get home, send a personal note to the interviewer thanking him or her for meeting with you. You should also give feedback on your impression and compliment the person or facility that most captivated your interest while you were there.