

TIS HIGH SCHOOL
COLLEGE ADVISING HANDBOOK



TEDA
International School
Tianjin·China

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SECTION 1: PURPOSES AND BASICS

Introduction

Welcome to the TIS High School College Advising Handbook for our grades 9-12 students and parents. As you embark on the exciting journey toward higher education, this handbook serves as a vital resource designed to guide you through the complex landscape of college admissions. Here, you will find essential information on key topics, including but not limited to high school transcripts, Grade Point Average (GPA) calculation, college entrance exams, and the college application process.

Our goal is to demystify the steps to college readiness and empower you with the knowledge and tools needed to make informed decisions. By understanding these elements, you can approach the college admissions process with confidence and clarity. Whether you are just beginning to explore your options or are well on your way, this handbook will support you in navigating the paths to your future academic endeavors.

College Admission Glossary

When applying to college, applicants are bound to come across unfamiliar terms. This glossary can help you make sense of all the information you're sorting through.

Admission Tests

Also known as college entrance exams, these tests are designed to measure students' skills and help colleges determine if students are ready for college-level work. The ACT and SAT are two standardized admission tests accepted globally.

ACT

A standardized college admission test that measures academic readiness through four multiple-choice sections: English, mathematics, reading, and science. An optional writing section is also available. The test aims to assess skills developed in high school that are important for success in college.

SAT

A standardized college admission test launched by the College Board, which features two main sections (English Reading and Writing, Mathematics). The full mark is 1600, with each section being 800. TIS is a College Board authorized SAT test center that is allowed to provide SAT testing services to its enrolled high school students.

Each school year, the SAT will be administered eight times, specifically, five times in semester one (August, September, October, November, December) and three times in semester two (March, May, and June). Typically, based on their readiness, students choose to take the SAT 3-4 times throughout high school and submit the highest score for college applications. TIS encourages its high school students to take his/her first SAT by no later than the second semester of grade 11 (Junior Year).

Advanced Placement (AP)

Advanced Placement (AP) is a program developed by the College Board that enables high school students to take college-level courses and consequently makes them stand out in their college application process. Meanwhile, taking the AP exams and achieving 3 or above out of 5 may allow high school students to earn college credit directly to save the tuition fee in their freshman year at college. These courses cover a wide range of subjects and are designed to be equivalent to introductory college courses.

College Application Essay

An essay that a college requires students to write and submit as part of their applications. Some colleges require applicants to answer specific questions, while others simply ask them to write about themselves. Colleges may refer to this as a "personal statement."

Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA)

An agreement that many colleges follow that gives applicants until May 1 to accept or decline offers of admission. This agreement gives applicants time to receive responses from most of the colleges to which they have applied before deciding on one.

College Credit

What you get when you successfully complete a college-level course. You need a certain number of credits to graduate with a degree. Colleges may also grant credit for scores on exams, such as those offered by the College Board's AP Program.

Common Application

A standard online application form that is accepted by all colleges that are members of the Common Application association. You can fill out this application once and submit it to one or several of the nearly 1100 colleges that accept it. <https://www.commonapp.org/>

Deferred Enrollment

Permission from a college that has accepted you to postpone enrollment in the college. The postponement is usually for up to one year.

Early Action (EA)

An option to submit your applications before the regular deadlines. When you apply early action, you get admission decisions from colleges earlier than usual. Early action plans aren't binding, which means that you don't have to enroll in a college if you are accepted through early action. Some colleges have an early action option called EA II, which has a later application deadline than their regular EA plan.

Early Decision (ED)

An option to apply to your first-choice college before the regular deadline. When you apply through ED, you get an admission decision earlier than usual. Early decision plans are binding. You agree to enroll in the college immediately if admitted. Some colleges have an early decision option called ED II, which has a later application deadline than their regular ED plan.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

A number that shows overall academic performance. It's computed by assigning a point value to each grade you earn.

Weighted GPA

A grade point average that's calculated using a system that assigns a higher point value to grades in more difficult classes. For example, some high schools assign the value of 5.0 (instead of the standard 4.0) for an A earned in an AP class. More information about the TIS high school GPA calculation can be available in Section 2.

High School Transcript

The official record of students' coursework, grades, and credits earned at high school. Your high school transcript is usually required for college admission and for some financial aid packages.

Legacy Applicant

A college applicant with a relative (usually a parent or grandparent) who graduated from that college. Some colleges give preference to legacy applicants (also called "legacies").

Matriculated College

Matriculated college" refers to the college where a student has successfully completed the admission process and is formally enrolled in a degree program.

Open Admission

A policy of accepting any high school graduate, no matter what their grades are, until all spaces in the incoming class are filled. Almost all two-year community colleges have an open-admission policy. However, a college with a generally open-admission policy may have admission requirements for certain programs.

Rolling Admission

An admission policy of considering each application as soon as all required information (such as high school records and test scores) has been received, rather than setting an application deadline and reviewing applications in a batch. Colleges that use a rolling admission policy usually notify applicants of admission decisions quickly.

SECTION 2: COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSENTIALS

The Anatomy of a College Application

To get your college application together, you need to gather many different pieces to give the admission team a glimpse into who you are. Be sure to stay organized and find out from your school's college advisor or principal which of these items you must send, and which items your high school will send.

Application Form

This is the most common first step required to show your interest in a college. It might require information and forms from your family. Both online and paper application forms are available, as well as services (such as The Common Application) that let you complete one application for multiple schools. It is recommended that you apply online, if possible, to avoid delays.

Application Fees

Fees vary, but generally it costs around 1000 RMB to apply to each college. Fees are nonrefundable. Many colleges offer fee waivers to local students who can't afford to pay.

High School Transcript

This is the record of the classes you have taken and your grades in each one. This is one of the most important parts of your application. Review your transcript for accuracy before completing your college application.

College Entrance Exam Scores

Some colleges require that you send your scores from a college entrance exam (e.g., SAT). Many colleges will only accept scores that are sent directly from the testing organizations (e.g., College Board). Check with each college to verify whether they require test scores and their policy on receiving test scores.

College Essays

Many colleges require an essay or a personal statement as part of your application. Your essay is a chance for you to give admission officers a better idea of your character and strengths. Your essay should be drafted well in advance of the application deadline to ensure adequate time for review and revision.

Letters of Recommendation

Many colleges require letters of recommendation from teachers or other adults who know you well. Ask your references to write recommendations well in advance of the deadlines. It is helpful to give them a summary of your achievements and goals to help them write about you.

Interviews, Auditions, and Portfolios

It is a good idea to ask for an interview, even if it is optional. It shows you're serious and gives you a chance to connect with an admissions officer. Even if a college is far away, you may be able to interview with a local alumnus. If you're applying to music, art, or theater programs, a college may want to see samples of your work as part of your application. This means you may need to audition, send portfolios, or submit videos demonstrating your artistic ability.

TIS High School Transcript & GPA Calculation

Generally speaking, the high school transcript is the most important document in the college application process because the applicant's grades in academic subjects are the single best predictor of success in college. Therefore, colleges look for evidence that a student has undertaken rigorous coursework, including honors courses and AP courses, as they wish to see the high school applicant keep challenging himself/herself in academics and make progress steadily.

- Considering that the applicants around the globe come from different high schools with various curricula, including AP, IB, or A-Level, and there is no uniformity in the way high schools calculate a student's overall grade point average (GPA), many colleges recalculate the GPA. Although labor-intensive, this customization helps colleges evaluate all applicants on a similar basis.
- In some cases, the GPAs are "weighted," with extra points being given for honors or Advanced Placement courses. In other cases, the GPAs are all "unweighted," with all courses treated equally and no extra points given for more challenging courses. Some institutions simply count the number of honors, AP, IB, and other advanced-level courses.
- Typically, the College Board assessments (PSAT-related, SAT, and AP Exams) are not included in the school transcript. High schools often need to send a mid-year transcript in January and a final transcript to the student's matriculated college in June.
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is the federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA gives families certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when they reach the age of 18 or attend a school beyond the high school level.

GPA Calculation

TIS prepares grade point average (GPA) calculations for its senior class only. GPA calculations are impacted by class designation – standard level, honors level, or Advanced Placement (AP) level, and the total number of credits earned. At TIS, high school students' GPAs will be calculated based on the scale below:

At each year's graduation ceremony, the grade 12 student who has achieved the highest GPA will be awarded as that year's valedictorian. To be eligible for consideration, a student must have attended TIS, without interruption, for at least the last five semesters of his/her high school career. For more specific information on how GPAs are calculated at TIS, please make an appointment to see the College Advisor.

Numerical Grade	Standard Classes	Honors Classes	Advanced Placement (AP) Classes
97-100	4	4.5	5
93-96	4	4.5	5
90-92	3.7	4.2	4.7
87-89	3.3	3.8	4.3

83-86	3	3.5	4
80-82	2.7	3.2	3.7
77-79	2.3	2.8	3.3
73-76	2	2.5	3
70-72	1.7	2.2	2.7
67-69	1.3	1.8	2.3
60-66	1	1	1

College Entrance Exams

What are college entrance exams? These tests are designed to measure students' skills and help colleges evaluate how ready they are for college-level work. The SAT and ACT are both accepted by nearly all colleges and universities.

Do all colleges require a college entrance exam as part of the application process? Most four-year institutions accept a college entrance exam score. Those that do not require these scores will indicate that in their admission policies. Providing your score allows you to strengthen your application.

How many times should a college entrance exam be taken? Most students take a college entrance exam three times—once in the spring of the junior year and twice at the beginning of the senior year.

How do colleges use test scores? They are used to apply a common standard for all students, no matter which high school they are coming from. Colleges look at your test scores, along with your high school grades and courses, to see how well prepared you are for college-level work. Some colleges use these scores for scholarship eligibility and course placement.

Does a college receive all the scores from every college entrance exam you've taken? Some colleges will allow you to select which scores you would like to be considered for admission, and others might have specific instructions about which scores get reported. This information, along with how they require it to be sent, will be included in their application guidelines.

What is the best way to prepare for a college entrance exam? The best way to prepare is to work hard both inside and outside the classroom. Take challenging courses, study hard, and read and write as much as you can.

What are other ways to prepare for the tests?

- Know what to expect. Being familiar with the test's format is the single best way to prepare for that test. Go to the testing organization's website to get familiar with the various test sections and the instructions for each part.
- Take preliminary tests. These tests (such as the PSAT™ 8/9, PSAT™ 10, and PSAT/NMSQT) have the same format and question types as the admission tests. You can use your score reports to help identify specific areas you need to focus on. At TIS, each school year, grades 8-10 students are required to take the PSAT assessments twice, once in the 1st semester and the other in the 2nd semester. Grade 11 students take their PSAT/NMSQT in semester one and will be encouraged to take their first real SAT in semester two.
- Practice, practice, practice. Students can use Official SAT Practice to practice for the SAT for free with a world-class platform offering personalized and instructional content. Using free practice tests from the testing organizations' websites, you can discover your strengths and weaknesses and learn how to manage your time wisely during the test.

High School Profile

What is a high school profile?

- A document created by a high school, updated annually, contains general information about the school and its community.
- The profile provides a general context for those who are unfamiliar with your campus, including college admissions officers, scholarship organizations, and student recruiters etc. It also offers an academic context regarding the student body (courses, test profile, admission, GPA, and rank explanation).

What information may be on your school profile?

Community and School Information: Include a description of the school and the community that depicts the socioeconomic and ethnic mix, and that gives information about history, mission, vision, accreditation, membership, your student population, and demographic makeup.

Curriculum: List graduation requirements, available academic programs, AP, and honors courses.

Grading: Explain procedures, especially any weighting system used.

Test Score Information: Report ranges for SAT and ACT.

College Attendance History: Include the percentage of graduates attending two-year and four-year institutions, and a list of colleges attended by recent graduates.

Extracurricular Opportunities: Include the activities in which students can participate, e.g., band, drama, leadership, sports, student council, etc., and a list of clubs and other organizations students can join.

High School Resume/CV

A document provides a quick summary of your extracurricular activities, special abilities and talents, and leadership skills.

- **Be concise:** Most readers will not have time to review a lengthy, rambling resume. You want to make the most of the time you have their attention.
- **Prioritize:** Know your audience and what information will be most important for them to see. Choose your key activities or skills to highlight at the beginning of the document. This shouldn't be a long list of activities, but rather the top activities to which you have committed a longer period of time and had in-depth participation.
- **Highlight honors and awards:** With the name of the award, be sure to summarize what the award was for, why you received it, and the date.
- **Provide detail:** Give a short description of the activity, time commitment, specific projects on which you served, and the leadership roles and your specific responsibilities in that position.
- **Avoid acronyms:** Although initials may reference a school club, an acronym may have no meaning to your reader. Be sure to provide a clear name of the group, and if not self-explanatory, a short description of the club's purpose.
- **Include summer programs or jobs:** Be sure to provide a brief description of the program or your job responsibilities.

The College Essay

The college essay is a unique chance for applicants to use his/her voice to support their college application. Many colleges require the essay as a way to hear from the student directly and to get a sense of who you are in your own words. It's a great opportunity to personalize your application beyond the grades, scores, and other information you've provided, and it can make a difference at decision time.

8 Key points that admission officers look for:

- A command of the basics of good writing
- A direct answer to the essay question
- A strong opening paragraph that captures the reader's interest
- A comprehensive argument or narrative—make your point and stick to it
- A style that is comfortable for you and that is appropriate for the subject matter
- Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Correct data—check your facts, dates, and names
- Succinctness—pay attention to the recommended length

What the essay can do for your application:

- Demonstrate your writing ability, a key component of success in college applications, and why you are a good match for the college.
- Explain your commitment to learning and that you are willing and able to be a contributing member to the college community.
- Draw distinctions between you and other applicants.

Make it personal:

- Often, you will be asked to write about a personal experience, an achievement, or a person who has been significant to you. Go beyond “what” or “who” and dig into “how” and “why”.
- If you write about a trip or event, describe how this experience affected you and is meaningful to you.
- If you are writing about a person in your life, be personal and specific, not just sentimental. Explain how or what this person did for you that is important to you.

Things to keep in mind:

- **Revise, revise, revise.** Take the time to read and revise. This process will help you develop a strong opening and a solid direction and refine what you are trying to express.
- **Show but not tell.** Give readers such convincing evidence that they will come to the conclusion that you want. Provide detailed examples instead of providing a list of things.
- **Be authentic.** Don't stress trying to write what you think they are looking for—just showcase who you are!
- **Just get started!** Writing something meaningful can be a long process, so get started right away to allow for time to draft and revise. Be sure to write your essay long before the deadline.

How to Make the Most of a College Interview

While not all schools offer interviews, the opportunity to interview offers you a chance to learn about the college and allows the interviewer to learn about you. Use it as a tool to assist your college selection. The interview can have a positive effect on your admission, which is rarely a negative one. Relax and be yourself!

- Your interview will usually be with an admission staff member, but it may be with a student, an alumnus, or a professional interviewer. Keep this person's perspective in mind.
- The interviewer is eager to get to know you and will try to put you at ease. The interviewer will answer your questions but will be more interested if you have helpful questions that show you have already done some research on the college.
- Be prepared. Know your test scores and your present areas of interest. If you are undecided about your career, feel free to say so (half of college students change their intended major). Think through some areas you would like to explore, competencies you would like to develop, and projects or situations that intrigue you.
- Do your homework about the school to get the obvious questions answered. You don't want to be silent when asked, "What would you like to know about our college?"

Questions or comments like, "What kinds of internships are offered, and how often do students take them?" show more maturity in your thinking than asking about the number of books in the college library.

- Interviewers may ask questions about your interests, extracurricular activities/jobs, books you've read, meaningful experiences, reasons for applying to this college, life at school, and similar topics. Be ready to talk about these subjects.
- Be honest. Everyone has strong and weak points.
- Plan to have your interview alone. If necessary, most admission officers prefer to speak with your family after talking with you, rather than during the interview.
- Choose appropriate clothes to wear for the interview.
- After the interview, send a thank-you note to the interviewer. Thank the person for his or her time and for referring to something specific you discussed.

Make Your Social Media Work for You

The impression that you make on a college admission officer may involve more than just an essay, a transcript, and some test scores. Colleges do pay attention to what prospective students post on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. In addition, potential employers for internships or permanent positions may also review your public social sites.

What your social media tells others

- It sheds light on your interests and passions.
- It may give a more in-depth look at your volunteer work or special projects.
- Your creativity and technology skills may be spotlighted.
- It may provide evidence of your interest in a particular major, college, or career.

Make the most of your social media time

- Keep your profile information up to date.
- Invest the time to maintain quality in your postings, blogs, and videos.
- Showcase your leadership, awards, or expertise in a meaningful manner.

Reminders

- Review your email address to ensure it doesn't include rude or inappropriate language or references.
- Carefully consider your tweets and other comments, particularly any negative references about prospective colleges, your teachers, or your peers.
- Monitor what photos you choose to post. Don't include those that may depict alcohol and certain party and peer activities that would reflect poorly on your judgment or character.
- A good rule of thumb is: Don't put anything on social media that you wouldn't include with your college application.

SECTION 3: COLLEGE PLANNING INFORMATION

College Planning: How to Get Started

Step 1: Get started

Assess your strengths, weaknesses, goals, passions, learning style, and social skills. What is most important to you in the college-search process? What do you hope to learn from the process?

Step 2: Make some basic decisions

- Where do you want to live?
- Will you go to college full-time? Part-time?
- Do you want to attend a single-sex school, a technical college, a public or private college, a large university, a small liberal arts college, or a historically black or religiously affiliated college?
- How important is the cultural/ideological diversity of the student body?

Step 3: Enlist help

Who do you want to assist you in this process (family, teachers, siblings, relatives, friends)?

Step 4: Consult references and websites

Use the college search website (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>) and visit the websites of the colleges that interest you.

Step 5: Talk

Discuss your goals and plans with your family, teachers, and high school college advisor. They can provide helpful advice.

Step 6: Meet with college representatives

Visit college representatives when they come to your high school. Make a list of your important questions to ask the representatives.

Step 7: Visit campus

Try to go to the college campus and take a tour, meet with admission representatives, and ask students what they think about the college. Can't make the trip? Many colleges provide virtual tours on their websites.

Finding the Right College

Most students want to find the “perfect” college, but the truth is, such a place doesn’t exist. Instead, there are numerous colleges where students can thrive and receive quality education. The college search should be a journey of self-discovery, helping students identify who they are and what they seek in terms of academic, social, and financial needs. By taking the time to reflect on their priorities and thoroughly researching various institutions, applicants can find schools that align with their goals. To assist your child in this process, start by identifying their priorities, then explore the characteristics of a range of schools, and finally, help them match these factors to find the best fit.

Before searching, students and their families need to consider the following factors:

- Affordability and Safety
- Geographic Location
- Type, Size, and Campus Setting
- Diversity of Student Body
- Campus Life
- Available Programs and Resources
- Retention and Graduation Rates
- Ranking

Affordability and Safety

Affordability and safety are essential for a successful educational experience. Focusing on these factors allows students and their families to make informed decisions that prioritize financial well-being and student safety, ultimately leading to a more positive university experience.

Geographic Location

Does the student want to visit home frequently, or is this a time to experience a new part of the world? Perhaps an urban environment is preferred, with access to museums, ethnic restaurants, and internship programs. Or maybe it’s easy access to the outdoors or the serenity of a small town.

Type, Size, and Campus Setting

Is a college the same thing as a university? What does “liberal arts” mean? Why are some colleges called public and others private? Campus size and setting will affect many students’ opportunities and experiences in terms of the range of academic majors offered, extracurricular possibilities, and the amount of personal attention that students will receive number of academic resources. More information can be found in the latter part of Section 3.

Diversity of Student Body

Students should explore the advantages of a diverse student body. The geographic, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of the student body can help students learn more about the world.

Campus Life

Before choosing a college, students should learn the answers to these questions:

What extracurricular activities, athletics, clubs, and organizations are available?

How do fraternities and sororities influence campus life?

Is housing guaranteed?
How are dorms assigned?

Available Programs and Resources

If a student has decided on a field of study, they can research the reputation of academic departments by talking to people in their field of interest. If a student is undecided, as many students are, they may want to choose an academically balanced institution that offers a range of majors and programs. Students normally don't pick a major until their sophomore year, and those students who know their major before they go to college are very likely to change their minds. Most colleges offer counseling to help students find a focus. In considering academic programs, students should look for special opportunities and pick a school that offers a number of possibilities.

Retention and Graduation Rates

One of the best ways to measure a school's quality and the satisfaction of its students is to learn the percentage of students who return after the first year and the percentage of entering students who go on to graduate. Comparatively good retention and graduation rates indicate that responsible academic, social, and financial support systems exist for most students.

Rankings

Students should keep in mind that those who rank colleges use certain criteria — endowment, student–faculty ratio, admit rate, and other measurable factors. But these factors may have little or no significance to an individual student. Students should realize that no ranked list of colleges can indicate which college is best for them.

Here are the steps you can take to find colleges where you will thrive.

Keep an open mind: although it's good to have some ideas in mind about what sorts of colleges will be good for you, stay open to all the possibilities at the beginning of your search.

Talk to people who know you: tell family, teachers, relatives, friends, and your college advisor at high school about your goals, and ask if they can suggest colleges that may be a good fit for you.

Don't limit your search: at the start of this process, you may rule out colleges because you think that they are too expensive or too hard to get into, but this may not be the reality. Remember that colleges look at more than just grades and test scores.

Do your homework: once you have a list of schools, it's time to do some research. To learn more about the colleges you're considering, check out college websites.

Types of Colleges: The Basics

Is a college the same thing as a university? What does “liberal arts” mean? Why are some colleges called public and others private? Here are the basic types of colleges.

Universities: Universities often are larger and offer more majors and degree options—bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees—than colleges. Most universities consist of several smaller colleges, such as colleges of liberal arts, engineering, or health sciences. These colleges can prepare you for a variety of careers or graduate study.

Liberal Arts Colleges: These colleges offer a broad base of courses in the liberal arts: literature, history, languages, mathematics, and life sciences. Most are private with four-year bachelor’s degree programs that can prepare you for a variety of careers or graduate study.

Public and Private Colleges: Public colleges are funded by local and state governments and usually offer lower tuition rates than private colleges, especially for students who are residents of the same state. Private colleges rely mainly on tuition, fees, and private sources of funding. Private donations can sometimes provide generous financial aid packages for qualified students.

Four-Year and Two-Year Colleges: Four-year colleges offer four-year programs that lead to a bachelor’s degree. These include universities and liberal arts colleges. Two-year colleges offer two-year courses leading to a certificate or an associate's degree. They include community, vocational-technical, and career colleges.

Community Colleges: Community colleges offer two-year associate's degrees that prepare you to transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor’s degree. They also offer other associate degrees and certificates that focus on preparing you for a specific career. Community colleges are often an affordable option with relatively low tuition.

Vocational-Technical and Career Colleges: Vocational-technical and career colleges offer specialized training for a particular industry or career. Possible programs of study include the culinary arts, firefighting, dental hygiene, and medical records technology. These colleges usually offer certificates or associate degrees.

Arts Colleges: In addition to regular coursework, arts colleges and conservatories provide training in areas such as photography, music, theater, or fashion design. Most of these colleges offer associate's or bachelor’s degrees in fine arts or a specialized field.

Sizing Up Colleges: Big vs Small

One Size Does Not Fit All

As you begin your college search, one of the first decisions you need to make—and one that helps narrow your list—is what size college you want to attend. Colleges offer many options, from small colleges with fewer than 1,000 students to large state universities with more than 35,000 students. What’s best for you depends largely on your personality and academic goals.

The Big College Experience

Do you picture yourself at a Big Ten university that offers everything from televised sporting events to countless degree programs? Then, a big college might be a good fit for you. Here are some of the benefits associated with big colleges.

- Wide variety of majors and courses
- Well-stocked libraries
- A variety of housing opportunities
- Well-funded sports programs
- Wide range of academic choices and student activities
- Distinguished or famous faculty
- State-of-the-art research facilities

Things to Consider

- To succeed at a big college, it’s best to go to know what subjects or general areas you’re interested in. Students who do best at large colleges tend to be go-getters who take advantage of the many opportunities available.
- Introductory classes at a large college may have hundreds of students. Some students find this environment exciting. Others feel overwhelmed.
- Another point: If you’re attracted to a college because of its famous faculty, find out how many classes are taught by the professors, not by their teaching assistants.

The Small College Experience

Do you enjoy personal attention from teachers and advisers? Then, a small college may be just what you need. Some students find that a smaller setting is a better fit. There may be fewer facilities, but there are also fewer students to compete with. Here are some of the benefits associated with small colleges:

- Small class sizes
- Hands-on learning opportunities
- Individually designed majors
- Strong advising system with advisors knowing their students well
- Strong sense of community
- Professors, not teaching assistants, teach most courses
- Opportunity to get to know professors well

Things to Consider

- Small colleges don’t offer as many majors as big colleges; however, some of them let you design your own.

- Courses at small colleges are usually taught by professors, not teaching assistants. The professors may even know your name and areas of interest.
- Be aware that small colleges don't have the research facilities of large universities. If you're hoping to be a research assistant, find out what kind of work and facilities are available before you apply.
- Although you'll find a robust social life at most small colleges, you'll find less in terms of big sporting events and the variety of events.

Campus Setting: Rural, Suburban, Urban

One of the steps in finding a good college for you is deciding what type of campus setting you prefer. Rural, suburban, and urban campuses have different advantages. The key is to find which setting lets you make the most of your college experience.

Rural Campuses are located in the country, often near farms and wilderness areas, and usually near small towns. Here are things to consider about rural campuses:

- Most rural campuses are self-contained, with most of the students living on campus. This can increase a college's sense of community.
- Rural campuses can provide access to outdoor learning opportunities, particularly in fields like agriculture or environmental science.
- Many rural colleges bring entertainment to their students and provide free events. Comedians and bands may perform on campus during college tours.
- Most rural colleges provide on-campus transportation options for students.
- The landscape of rural campuses can vary widely. A rural campus in Ohio, for example, will be much different from a rural campus in Alaska.

Suburban Campuses are located in small cities, large towns, or residential areas near cities. Here are things to consider about suburban campuses:

- Suburbs often combine some of the best features of urban and rural areas.
- Suburban campuses usually offer access to nearby cities and outdoor activities.
- Suburban colleges are frequently self-contained, which can create a strong sense of community.
- Suburban colleges often have connections to the towns where they're located. This can provide opportunities such as jobs and entertainment.
- Public transportation may be available in addition to a college's transportation options.

Urban Campuses are located in cities. Here are things to consider about urban campuses:

- Some urban campuses are spread throughout a city, while others are self-contained within a city.
- Many urban colleges offer off-campus learning experiences. This may mean a chance to explore the work world through cooperative classes and internships.
- Urban colleges tend to attract culturally diverse students.
- Students can find entertainment options—such as museums, concerts, and plays—on and off urban campuses.
- Cities usually offer substantial public transportation options.

Assessing Your List of Colleges

As you develop a list of colleges that interest you, be sure you can answer these questions about them.

The Basics

- Where is the college?
- Have you taken the coursework the college requires for admission?
- What size is the college? How many undergraduate students are there?
- What is the college's selectivity ratio (what proportion of applicants were admitted last year)?
- Does the college offer majors that interest you?
- Is the college coed or single sex?
- What percentage of students live off campus?
- How many of the students graduate in four years? Five years? Six years?
- How many first-year students return for their sophomore year?
- How much does the program cost? What is the total per-year expense?

Where Would You Fit In?

- What are the admission test scores at the colleges of interest to you? Where does that place you?
- What were the high school GPAs of most of the freshmen last year?
- Are freshmen guaranteed on-campus housing? If not, where do they live?
- Are there extracurricular activities that interest you?

Visit Their Websites

- What are their strong academic programs? (Ask a college representative, students, graduates, and teachers.)
- What courses are required for graduation?
- Are the courses you need/want available each semester?
- Are there special programs (study abroad, internships, etc.) of interest to you?
- What is social life like? What percentage of students join fraternities or sororities?
- Do the pictures and the language the college uses to describe itself attract you?
- What is your general impression of the college?
- Is the school accredited?
- If professional certification is required for employment in the field that interests you, how many students enrolled in the school's program pass the certification exam?

Admission Process

- When are applications due?
- What does the application contain? Are essays required?
- Is an interview suggested or required? Is an interview available from staff or alumni?

How to Get the Most Out of a Meeting with College Representatives

Before Meeting the College Representative

- Take a pen and a small notebook.
- Take a bag to carry the brochures you pick up.
- Write down your most important questions in advance so you don't forget them.
- Jot down notes about the college while your memory is fresh.

20 Questions to Ask College Representatives

College representatives genuinely enjoy talking to high school students and answering questions about their college. The following questions will help start a good dialogue.

- What makes your college unique?
- For what academic programs is your college known?
- How would you describe the students at your college? Where are most of them from?
- Where do students hang out on campus?
- What happens on weekends — are there things to do on campus or in town, or do most students go home?
- Are fraternities and sororities a big part of campus life?
- What are the housing options for freshmen?
- Do many students live off campus?
- Is there a sports complex or fitness center?
- What are the most popular clubs and activities?
- What's security like on campus?
- What's the surrounding area like? Is it easy to get around?
- What are the most popular majors?
- How would you describe the academic pressure and workload?
- What support services (academic advisers, tutors, etc.) are available?
- Do I need to bring my own computer?
- What's the faculty like? Are they accessible outside of class?
- Are there opportunities for internships?
- Is there job placement help for graduates?
- Are there any big changes in the work that I should know about?

After You Get Home

- Make a point of going through the materials and your notes within one week after the meeting. You'll probably remember more about your conversations with college representatives while the memories from the meeting are still fresh.
- Follow up on any college that interests you by contacting the admissions office to ask further questions and, if possible, plan a visit to the campus.

College Application Tips

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you start your college application process.

Stay Cool

College applications can be stressful to complete, but this is also an exciting time. Work with your college advisor, your family, and others to get through it all. You got this!

Plan Ahead

Review each part of the application before you get to work. Some applications will require the same basic information, and others will have unique requests.

Get Organized

Keep track of the materials and many parts for each application. Make a folder for each application to keep all materials together. Tell your college advisor or other appropriate school personnel which materials your school needs to send to the college (such as your transcript and recommendations).

Be Accurate

Ensure that you put together an organized and accurate application. Review for grammar and typos. Make sure your name is the same on all elements of your application. Double-check that all documents you're submitting (like transcripts) are correct.

Set a Schedule

Allow time to get your requirements together, get input from your college advisor or other adults, review them as a whole, and revise as needed. Keep a close eye on the application deadline.

Ask For Help

Ask your college advisor, teachers, or family to review your application, essays, and other materials before you submit them. Request a letter of recommendation at least one month before your deadline and provide supporting material to help them write the best one for you.

Submit and Save

Print and save the completed application before you send it. Please only submit it once—either online or via mail.

SECTION 4: OTHERS AND RESOURCES

NCAA Eligibility Center

The NCAA Eligibility Center is responsible for certifying the academic and amateur status of all Division I and II incoming student-athletes. College-bound student-athletes can create an account with the Eligibility Center by visiting eligibilitycenter.org. We recommend that students register during their sophomore year of high school to ensure they have adequate time to confirm they are on track for meeting initial eligibility requirements.

Academic requirements for each college-bound student-athlete are based on the student's core-course grade point average and their coursework.

What Are Core Courses?

Core courses are those that are academic in nature, taught at or above your high school's regular academic level, receive credit toward high school graduation, and are four-year college preparatory courses. To be used in an academic certification, the courses need to be listed on the student's transcript with their grades and credits. Core courses must be in one of the following academic areas:

- English
- Math (Algebra 1 or higher)
- Natural/physical science
- Social Science
- Foreign language
- Comparative religion or philosophy

Division I Eligibility Requirements

- Achieving a high school diploma
- Complete 16 core courses in the following areas:
 - English—four years
 - Math (Algebra 1 or higher)—three years
 - Natural/physical science (one year of lab if offered)—two years
 - Social science—two years
 - Additional math or natural/physical science—one year
 - Additional courses (in any of the above subject areas or comparative religion or philosophy)—four years
- Complete 10 of the 16 core courses before the start of the seventh semester, including seven in English, math, or natural/physical science.
- Complete the 16 NCAA-approved core courses in eight academic semesters or four consecutive academic years from the beginning of ninth grade. If students graduate from high school early, they must still meet core-course requirements.

Division II Eligibility Requirements

- Achieving a high school diploma
- Complete 16 core courses in the following areas:
 - English—three years
 - Math (Algebra 1 or higher)—two years

Natural/physical science (one year of lab if offered)— two years
Social science—two years
Additional math or natural/physical science—three years
Additional courses (in any of the above subject areas or comparative religion or philosophy)—four years

Grades 9-12 Students' College Planning Timeline

Freshmen Year (Gr. 9)

1. Focus on academic pursuits (you are encouraged to achieve 85% and above in all subjects).
2. Take the PSAT 8/9 at TIS in both semesters.
3. If applicable, prepare and take the AP Exam at TIS in May.
4. Adapt yourself to high school by exploring and getting involved with extracurricular activities.
5. **Summer Holiday:** preparing for either the TOEFL or IELTS exam.

Sophomore Year (Gr. 10)

1. Focus on academic pursuits by taking demanding courses (you are encouraged to achieve 88% and above in all subjects).
2. Take the PSAT/NMSQT at TIS in semester one and the PSAT 10 in the 2nd semester.
3. Continue to explore extracurricular activities to showcase your leadership, athletic skills, and community service awareness.
4. Register and take the TOEFL or IELTS exam to achieve your goal score.
5. Prepare and take the AP Exam(s) at TIS in May.
6. **Summer Holiday:** polishing your English and math skills to prepare for the SAT.

Junior Year (Gr. 11)

1. Stay focused on academic pursuits by taking AP courses related to your prospective undergraduate programs (you are encouraged to achieve 90% and above in all subjects).
2. If applicable, continue to take the TOEFL or IELTS exam if your goal score has not been achieved.
3. Take the PSAT/NMSQT at TIS in October.
4. Register to take your first SAT by the end of junior year.
5. Meet with admissions representatives when they visit TIS.
6. Prepare and take the AP Exam(s) at TIS in May.
7. Discuss senior year courses with your college advisor if necessary.
8. Become more committed to several extracurricular activities.
9. **Summer Holiday:** being committed to college application-related activities, e.g., college exploration, college tour, SAT preparation, and college essay writing.

Senior Year (Gr. 12)

1. Stay focused on academic pursuits. Keep challenging yourself in academics by taking more AP courses (you are encouraged to achieve 93% and above in all subjects).
2. Register for the SAT if you plan to sit for a fall administration.
3. Meet with admissions representatives when they visit TIS.
4. If possible, take on larger roles in your most significant extracurricular commitments.
5. Take the TOEFL or IELTS exam again if necessary.
6. Finalize your college list and begin working on applications.
7. Share essays with the TIS college advisor and/or teachers for their advice.
8. Complete and submit your college applications before the deadlines set by your prospective universities.

9. Meet with the TIS college advisor to discuss your college admissions offers and finalize your matriculation university.
10. Prepare and take the AP Exam(s) at TIS in May and apply for the corresponding college credit(s) if applicable.
11. ***Summer Holiday***: applying for the Student Visa and getting ready to attend your matriculation university.

College Resources for Students and Families

- **BigFuture:** A complete site offered by the College Board, with college and scholarship searches, information about the SAT, and other material about the college search and application process. <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>
- **NCAA:** Official NCAA website that gives details of student-eligibility requirements to play NCAA sports. <https://www.ncaa.org/>
- **Common Application:** One of the most commonly used college application platforms in the USA, which allows applicants to fill out their application once and apply to up to 20 universities and colleges in the U.S. <https://www.commonapp.org/>
- **UCAS:** Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is an application platform that is used in the UK for applying to higher education programs, including universities and colleges. The platform aids students in finding the right courses and institutions based on their academic goals and preferences, allowing students to submit applications for undergraduate courses. <https://www.ucas.com/>
- **OUAC:** Ontario Universities' Application Center (OUAC) is a non-profit, centralized application service for applicants to Ontario universities in Canada. As a division of the Council of Ontario Universities, OUAC values equity, diversity, and inclusion, believes that every person has a right to equal treatment, and facilitates the process of applying to an Ontario university. <https://www.ouac.on.ca/>
- **Unifrog:** A platform, which is designed to help students with their college planning and application processes, offers various tools and resources for researching universities, tracking applications, and exploring courses. Students can also find guidance on writing personal statements, preparing for interviews, and understanding admission requirements for different institutions. TIS has a partnership with Unifrog to support our high school students in making informed decisions about their future education. <https://www.unifrog.org/>