

**Helpful Hints for**

# Getting



# Into



# College

**Providence Christian High School**

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# Helping You Prepare for College

## *Preparing for College*

A college education is an investment in yourself and your future. Your high school years are an important time for planning and preparing for college. What you do during these four years (even including that last exam in your senior year) is going to impact your future. Admissions standards vary from college to college. Colleges decide if they want you as a student based on your academic achievement, extracurricular activities, and other accomplishments. The sooner you begin planning, the easier it will be to achieve your education goals.

## *Reasons to Go to College*

Some type of college degree, whether it is from a technical, community or four year college, can open the door to more opportunities and choices for you in your future. Although going to college takes a lot of planning and preparation, it will improve your quality of life in the long run. The knowledge and skills that you gain can be used for the rest of your life.

### **More job opportunities**

Education will allow you to get and keep a better job and give you more jobs from which to choose.

### **Increased earning power**

A person with a college degree will earn \$640,000\* more over a lifetime than a person without a degree.

### **Learning opportunities**

College will allow you to gain more knowledge that will be helpful throughout life both on and off the job.

### **Broaden your perspective**

Meeting new and interesting people, experiencing new social situations and learning to be independent can increase your understanding of the world.

### **Career preparation**

Obtaining the skills and knowledge you need to prepare for a specific career.

### **Achievement of a personal goal**

Obtaining a college degree may be the stepping stone that will allow you to achieve a lifelong dream.

\*U.S. Dept. of Labor Statistics 1996

## ***Seek Hard Work and Work Hard***

It is no secret that your grades and the classes that you have taken play an important role in getting into the college of your choice and that your high school transcript is a significant part of the college admission evaluation process.

### **Take a Variety of Classes**

This will show your interest in different areas of study. It may also help you investigate subjects or potential careers that appeal to you. Take some elective courses in an area you think you may be interested in studying after high school.

### **Get Good Grades**

The grades reported on your high school transcript will play a major role in the college admission process. If you work hard and earn good grade, colleges will see that you are serious about continuing your education. Your grade point average and class rank may also impact scholarships and grant money from colleges and other sources.

### **Take Challenging Courses**

Your grades do matter. However, colleges don't want to see students go for the easy "A" but prefer students who have challenged themselves with tougher courses. Honors or Advanced Placement classes will usually be given more weight in the admission process because they demonstrate the student's desire to learn. Therefore a "B" in an advanced course may actually help more than an "A" in a less difficult course.

### **Take More than Enough Courses**

Taking just the minimum classes needed to graduate from high school may not be enough to get you into college. The actual classes you may be required to take to get admitted will vary according to the college you choose, what degree you are seeking and your major course of study. You will need to check the college requirements of the college you want to attend.

### **Get Involved**

Although colleges look for students who have taken challenging classes and receive good grades, they also seek students who have been active in school activities or community organizations.

#### **Participation in extracurricular activities**

Choose from a variety of activities such as, athletics, band, choir, drama, etc.

#### **Volunteer or work part-time**

Get involved in the community  
Get a summer part time job.

## ***College Entrance Exams***

Grading policies may vary from high school to high school. For this reason, colleges often use standardized tests as a common measurement to evaluate students. Most colleges will require some type of entrance exam, which may be a factor used in the admissions and/or financial aid process.

### **Determine Which Test(s) to Take**

Most colleges accept SAT and ACT assessments. Community colleges and technical schools may require a different test. Check with each college you are considering to determine which test is preferred.

### **Prepare for the Test**

There are a wide variety of excellent study materials available to students preparing for the tests. Taking the PSAT is a good practice for taking an assessment type test.

### **Score Well on the Tests**

In addition to your GPA, class rank, courses taking and extra curricular activities, colleges may use them to determine admission and financial aid.

### **Retake the Tests if Necessary**

If your test score is low you can take the test again. Studies have shown that students can usually improve their score by taking the test again. The best score is the one the colleges will consider.

## High School Courses Recommended for College

Subject Area	Years	Sample Courses
English	4 years	Grammar, Writing, American Literature, World Literature
Math	3 to 4 years	Algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus
Science w/lab	3 to 4 years	Biology, Earth Science, Chemistry, Physics,
Social Studies	3 to 4 years	Geography, U.S. history, U.S. Government World history
Foreign Languages	2 to 4 years	2 years of any one language
Arts	1 or more years	Art, Dance, Drama, Music
Electives	1 to 3 years	Economics, Statistics, Computer Science, Communications, Psychology

*The sample courses above are intended as a general guide only. Actual requirements may vary from college to college. Check with your college to find out what classes are required prior to admission.*

## ***Advanced Placement***

Advanced Placement courses are for those students desiring a greater academic challenge. These courses are designed to be the equivalent of university level courses, and as such are more demanding than a typical high school course. AP courses are typically used to prepare students to take the AP exams in May of each year. Currently, Providence has a very limited AP program (Calculus), but there are plans to increase this number in future years. For students desiring AP courses not currently offered at Providence, online AP courses might be a good option. See Mr. Luckey for more details.

### **Reasons to take AP Courses**

- For everyone:
  - AP courses are weighted and result in a higher grade point average (GPA)
  - Universities look favorably upon students that take more difficult classes. In fact, this is one of the most important factors a university will consider when deciding whether or not to accept a student.
  
- For those wishing to enter an American university:
  - If a student passes an AP exam with a score of 3 (or better) out of 5, university credit may be received for the course. In this way, students can take fewer courses at the university, thereby saving money and allowing themselves to advance more quickly.
  
- For those wishing to enter a university outside the United States:
  - If a student passes five specific exams, s/he will earn the Advanced Placement International Diploma (APID). The APID is considered by many international universities to be the equivalent of the International Baccalaureate. In order to receive the APID, students must pass five different exams from the following areas:
    - 2 languages (the languages must not be the same)
    - 1 science or math
    - 1 Global Perspectives Class
    - 1 from any domain except for another language
  - For some universities, AP exams can be taken instead of the normal entrance requirements (e.g. A level exams in England). Also, five AP exams may allow a student to finish British universities in three years, while a student without AP exams will need an extra year to complete the required coursework.

# **Your Plan of Action for Getting into the College of Your Choice**

## ***Freshman Year***

### **Fall:**

1. Do your best in all your classes! Your grades in the ninth grade do count when the college admissions consider you for college.
2. Start a notebook which records your various accomplishments (e.g. class officer, Student Government representative, volleyball team captain, etc.)
3. Meet with the Guidance Counselor early in the year to map out a four year high school program that will meet college entrance requirements. If you plan to take an AP course you will need to plan to take the prerequisite course.

### **Throughout the school year**

1. Consider volunteering in your community. Colleges look for this in your application.
2. Explore clubs and activities in and out of school to develop your interest and abilities.
3. If you want to participate in sports in college you must look into the National Collegiate Athletic Association requirements for the sport in which you are interested.
4. Research careers and talk to your parents about your interests and goals.
5. Start a notebook or folder in which you will keep all the information you will need to gather during your high school career for applying to colleges.

### **Summer:**

1. Do lots of reading for pleasure and learn more vocabulary words. This will help you in gaining speed and comprehension in your reading.

## ***Sophomore Year***

### **September**

1. Make a list of the college majors that interest you. Check to see if your high school course load will prepare you for them.

### **October**

1. Take the PSAT
2. Begin looking up colleges which offer the majors that interest you.

### **November, December, January**

1. Discuss with your Guidance Counselor about your desires and reasons for going to college.
2. Begin researching colleges on the internet, College handbooks, and talking with people about the colleges they know about, graduated from, or attended.

### **February through June**

1. Continue your college research.

### **Summer**

1. Read for pleasure.
2. Continue your research of colleges. Check “Research Information” page.

## *Junior Year*

1. **Take the PSAT** in October and be sure and review the report of your answers to learn where your weaknesses and strengths are.
  2. Sign up for the ACT and SAT. Take these tests several times, since practice helps to get a higher score. Check with the office for the dates, or go online to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and/or [www.act.org/aap](http://www.act.org/aap).
  3. **Junior year grades are extremely important for college admissions.** They will look to see if you took difficult courses and honors or AP courses, in addition to looking at your grades.
  4. **Continue your college research.** Make a list of 10 – 15 colleges that meet your requirements.
  5. **By May, narrow this list down to five.**
    - a. Check the entrance requirements (required high school courses and SAT scores).
    - b. Cost and financial aid
    - c. Dormitories/Living arrangements
    - d. Sports and other activities
    - e. Size and location
- 
1. Begin researching for Scholarships (beware of scholarship scams, especially any that charge you for their services)
  2. Talk with your parents about any guide lines and limitations they have as to where you should go to college.
  3. Keep a calendar of application deadlines and scholarship deadlines.
  4. Consider which teachers or other adults you will ask to write your letters of recommendation.
  5. Consider taking the Advanced Placement exams of any AP courses you have taken while the information is fresh in your mind.
  6. During the summer start working on college applications and essays. Assemble any other writing samples, portfolios, or audition tapes a college requires.

## *Senior Year*

### **September**

1. Determine your career interest and decide which college or university best suits you and your goals.
2. Register for the SAT or ACT. Check with the office for the dates, or go online to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and/or [www.act.org/aap](http://www.act.org/aap).
3. Ask your teachers and administrator to write your letters of recommendation for admission and scholarship applications.
4. Visit your counselor about college applications and **deadlines**.

## **October**

1. Work on your essay for admission applications if necessary.
2. Review your college list and determine the final five you will apply to.
3. Make sure your folder or notebook of the records and materials you will need for filling out your applications is complete. This will make filling out your applications much easier.
4. Begin filling out your applications. Check with the counselor for help or questions.

## **November**

1. Begin submitting your applications to the colleges. You should have all of them sent by November 30<sup>th</sup> even though the deadline might be later. Community colleges may be an exception. Check with the counselor.
2. Request official transcripts from the counseling office and any letters of recommendation that you still need from teacher or administrators.
3. Remember to keep copies of all applications and other forms you submit to colleges

## **December**

1. Complete and submit any application not already sent.
2. Stay ***FOCUSED!*** All of your grades in your senior year can affect your admittance to the college of your choice.
3. Finalize any outside grants and scholarship applications.

## **January**

1. Submit your FAFSA to the processor as soon after Jan 1 as possible.
2. Remember to keep copies of all forms you submit to colleges and agencies.
3. Ask the counseling office to send your first semester transcript to the colleges where you applied.

## **February**

1. Watch the mail for letters of acceptance from the colleges you applied to.
2. Remember all senior grades are important and can affect your scholarship eligibility.
3. Submit your FAFSA if you have not already one so.

## **March**

1. Watch for your Student Aid Report (SAR) which is the result of the FAFSA you filled out.
2. Watch the mail for more acceptances from the colleges you applied to.
3. Contact the financial aid office at each college you listed on the FAFSA to see if they
4. have received your SAR information.

## **April**

1. Compare the finalized aid packages from the colleges to which you have been accepted.
2. Make a final decision about the college of your choice. Send the required deposit and sign and return the financial aid award letter if required. Note other deadlines for your college.
3. Notify the other colleges to which you applied that you will not be attending.

## **May**

1. Take any AP exams for which you qualify.

## **May/June**

1. Ask your counseling office to send your final grade transcript to the college you have chosen.

## **Choosing *Your* College**

Going to college is one of the most exciting, important and challenging times of your life. Before you pack your bags, you first have to decide what college you want to attend. There may be several colleges that interest you and that's why it is important to weigh every option carefully. It is essential that you spend time thinking about what you want out of your college experience and what environment you will find most comfortable. What is important to you may not necessarily be the same as what's important to your best friend, sibling or parents. The key is to take inventory of what is most important to you. Review your career plans and find a college that is a good fit for you. This will take some time and effort, however, the happier you are in the college you choose, the more likely you are to succeed and complete your degree.

### ***Steps to Choosing a College***

Before you choose a college it is important to spend some time thinking about what you want out of your college experience in order to find the one that is the best fit for you.

#### **Determine what is important to you.**

The following are some suggestions for items you might want to consider in choosing a college.

##### **Size of the colleges and classes**

Do you want to know most every one on campus or only a few? Do you want to be in a class of 300 or 25?

##### **Location**

Do you prefer to live in a large city or a smaller city? What type of climate do you prefer, cold or warm? What geographical location? How far away from home do you want to live?

##### **What type of institution**

Do you want a two year, four year, or a community college? Are you interested in a vocational/technical school?

##### **Academic program**

Does the college have the major that you wish to study? If you are undecided, are there a variety of majors offered?

##### **Campus life**

What types of events do they have? Do they have athletics, organizations, clubs, or other activities that interest you?

##### **Diversity**

Do students come from other states and countries?

### **Cost and financial aid availability**

Is the school affordable? Do not eliminate a school from your list because of cost. Compare the financial aid packages from the schools you are considering. Some times the more expensive schools are able to offer a better financial aid package than less expensive schools.

### **Living accommodations**

Do the students live on campus or off campus? What are the residence halls like?

### **Safety on campus**

Is campus security readily available? What types of security programs are there? Request a campus security report.

## **Make a list of potential colleges**

Based on the criteria that are important to you, make a list of colleges that fit your requirements. It is best to be **making this list by the FALL of your JUNIOR year.**

Do a college search on line

Search the internet, read books, magazines and newspapers to find out about colleges.

Attend college fairs

Talk to friend, family, teachers and your counselor for information and advice.

Request information from the colleges.

## **Narrow your choices**

Determine which of the colleges on your list best fit your criteria and interests. By fall of your senior year your list should be narrowed down to three to five colleges you are still interested in attending.

Review the website and take virtual tours. Familiarize yourself with all aspects of the college.

If you can, visit the college. Make an appointment before you go.

Use a college comparison chart.

## **Apply to the 3 to 5 colleges that interest you the most**

Submit your applications to the colleges that you are interested in attending during the **fall of your senior year. These should all be sent by Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>.**

## The ACT vs. The SAT

### What's the difference between the ACT and the SAT?

Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. Most colleges and universities accept either test. So as you begin to think about college and creating the best application package possible, your admissions plan should begin with the question, "Which test should I take?" When weighing your options, keep in mind that there are differences in test structure and the type of content assessed. Use the chart below to see which test makes the most of your strengths to help you determine which test might be best for you.

	ACT	SAT
<b>Length</b>	3 hours, 25 minutes (including the 30-minute optional Writing Test)	3 hours, 45 minutes
<b>Sections</b>	4 test sections (5 with the optional Essay, known as the Writing Test)	10 Sections
<b>Areas Tested</b>	English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing (optional)	Critical Reading, Math, Writing (includes the Essay), Experimental (unscored)
<b>Reading (ACT) / Critical Reading (SAT)</b>	4 Reading Comprehension passages, 10 questions per passage	Mix of Reading Comprehension and Sentence Completion questions that require vocabulary expertise
<b>Science</b>	Science Reasoning (analysis, interpretation, evaluation, problem solving) covered	Science not included
<b>Math</b>	Math accounts for 1/4 of overall score  <b>Topics Covered:</b> Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry (4 questions)	Math accounts for 1/3 of overall score  <b>Topics Covered:</b> Basic Geometry and Algebra II
<b>Essay</b>	Last thing you do (optional); 30 minutes  Not included in composite score	First thing you do; 25 minutes  Factored into overall score
<b>Scoring</b>	Total composite score of 1-36 (based on average of 4 tests)  4 scores of 1-36 for each test  Score of 0-12 for the optional Essay	Total score out of 2400  3 scores of 200-800 for each section  2 sub-scores of 20-80 for writing multiple choice and 0-12 for the Essay

<b>Wrong Answer Penalty</b>	No wrong answer penalty	Yes, 1/4 point per wrong answer (except for Math Grid-in questions)
<b>Sending Score History</b>	You decide which score is sent	Your entire score history will be sent automatically

**How can I find out if a school accepts the ACT, SAT or both?**

You should be able to find this information by visiting the school's website or by calling their admissions office.

**How can I figure out which test I might score better on?**

Learning about the differences between the two tests is one thing, knowing how you actually might score is another. The only way to know for sure is to take a practice test. Kaplan ([www.kaplan.com/TestPreparation](http://www.kaplan.com/TestPreparation)) offers practice ACT, SAT, or SAT/ACT Combo Tests to help you identify which test could best showcase your strengths during the admission process.

## **Types of US Post Secondary Educational Institutions**

**Note:** The term college is often used instead of university. But, there is a difference!

### ***Colleges***

- Offer undergraduate students a bachelor's (4-year) or associate's (2-year) degree
- Do not offer advanced degrees
- Liberal Arts Colleges have a broad base of courses are available (such as, social sciences, humanities, science and business)
- Courses of study begin with general education requirements: students choose at least one area of in-depth study to be their major
- Generally smaller than universities, with smaller classes
- There are specialty colleges such as those for: art, engineering, music, culinary, religion, hospitality.

### ***Universities***

- Offer several levels of degrees (bachelor's, master's and doctorates)
- Includes a liberal arts college as well as professional colleges and graduate programs
- Divided in to several colleges such as the College of Business or College of Education
- Wide variety of academic programs
- Generally, universities are larger than liberal arts colleges (although there are some smaller Universities) with larger classes
- Classes often taught in lecture format and may be taught by graduate assistants

### ***Community or Junior Colleges***

- May offer an associate's degree, diploma or certificate programs
- Has specialized occupational programs
- May also be used as preparation for a 4 year college or university
- Class size is general smaller & students are able to receive more individual attention.
- They are less expensive than larger colleges and universities

### ***Technical and Specialty Institutions***

- May offer an associate degree, certification or diploma program
- Preparation for a specific career with specialization in one skill area (i.e. art, music )
- Specialized programs offer training in a technical area (i.e., medical technology, business, cosmetology or computer programming) and a few general courses are required
- Core classes are career specific

## College Comparison Chart

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b><u>College 1</u></b>	<b><u>College 2</u></b>	<b><u>College 3</u></b>	<b><u>College 4</u></b>	<b><u>Notes</u></b>
Size					
Type					
Academic Programs					
Student Activities					
Diversity of Student Body					
Housing Options					
Athletics					
Cost					
Financial Aid Availability					
Facilities					
Campus Safety					
Overall Impression					
Total Rating					

# Financial Aid

Financial aid is available from a variety of source, including the federal and state governments, private organizations and colleges themselves.

## *Two basic types of financial aid.*

1. One is based on financial need. This is determined by the financial status of the student and their parents.
2. The other is based on academic achievement, athletic abilities or other special skills of the student. These are often referred to as scholarships.

## *Students who are U.S. citizens*

For **federal assistance**, you must submit a completed FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). There are no fees required in the application process regardless of which method you choose; A paper application or on the internet by using FAFSA on the Web ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov))

*Foreign Students* will need to check with the individual college/university and their own government sources.

## *Grants and Scholarships*

Grants and Scholarships are financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid. There are again a variety of sources including federal and state governments, colleges, or private organizations.

U.S. federal grants:

- Federal Pell Grant – one of the largest need-based grants available to students with exceptional financial need.
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

## *Loans*

Loans are debts that must be repaid. In most cases repayment begins after the student graduates or quits college.

Eligibility for the loans is determined by the results of the FAFSA.

There are four main types; Federal Perkins loans, Federal Stafford Loans, Federal Plus Loans, and Alternative Loans.

## *Other Programs of Financial Aid*

- Work Study – students work on campus to help pay for their college expenses.
- Americorps – Financial aid in exchange for community services
- Military programs – Military academies, ROTC, Dependents of veterans who are permanently or total disabled.

## Scholarship Search

### **BEWARE of Scholarship Scams !!!**

There are many advertisements for getting scholarships. If they want money it is probably a scam. It is not necessary to pay anyone. "Scholarship Search Services" do not have any special data base that you can not access on your own.

### **Some reliable sources:**

Federal Trade Commission for Consumers  
"Student Guide" from the US Dept. of Education  
Fast Web (Financial aid search through the Web)  
Hispanic College funds  
College Board  
Private organizations, especially in the area of parents' employment.

### **When should I start?**

Start searching early in your junior year, or even in your sophomore year.

### **How long will it take?**

It takes time, effort, commitment and a lot of perseverance.  
Continue even through your college years.

### **There are many other scholarships based on such things as:**

Your nationality, country or state of residency, and religious affiliation.

*There is much financial aid and many scholarships available, but it will take time and persistence to locate them.*

## College Resource Information

### **Books**

**“College Handbook”** Published by College Board

This book has information about colleges, universities & technical schools (over 3000) in the U.S.A., as well as other helpful material.

**“Book of Majors”** Published by College Board

This book explains the different subject areas & career fields one might be interested in pursuing.

It also lists colleges & universities that offer the various majors

**“Ultimate College Guide”** Published by U.S. News & world report

This book includes:

A ranking of the colleges and universities in the U.S.

College profiles, Index to majors and a College planner

**“Campus Visits & College Interviews”** Published by College Board

**“The College Application Essay”** published by Collage Board

### **Internet**

College Board at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (has all the same material as the “College Handbook” and more).

ACT - [www.act.org/aap](http://www.act.org/aap); SAT – [www.wollegeboard.com](http://www.wollegeboard.com)

*Best colleges* at [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

Use the internet to research colleges and universities:

American colleges in Europe and in other countries.

U.S. Colleges & universities by name, state, or city;

For non U.S. Colleges in other countries. Search by the country or city.

## Glossary

**Associate (Arts or Science) Degree.** A degree granted by a college or university after the satisfactory completion of the equivalent of a two-year-full-time program of study.

**Bachelor's Degree** A degree received after the satisfactory completion of a four or five year full-time program of study at a college or university. Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Bachelor of Science (BS) are the most common baccalaureates.

**Community/Junior College** A college that offers only the first two years of under graduate study that transfers to a four year college or university for completion of the last two years of undergraduate. It also has specialty programs that can be completed in two years or less for which one can receive a diploma or certificate.

**Credit hour** A unit of measure **representing a hour (50 minutes) of** instruction over a 15 week period in a semester or trimester system, or 10 week period in a quarter system. It is applied toward the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate or other formal award.

**FAFSA** Free Application for Federal Student Aid is a form completed by the applicants for federal student aid.

**GPA** Grade Point Average. A system used to evaluate the overall scholastic performance of a student.

**Graduate degrees** A degree pursued after a student has earned a bachelor's degree. The master's degree takes one to three years of study (depending on the area of study) after the bachelors degree has been completed.

**Honors Programs** Any special program for very able students that offers the opportunity for education achievement, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these.

**Internship** A short term, supervised work experience, usually related to the students major field of study for which the student receives credit.

**Liberal Arts** The study of humanities, (literature, the arts, and philosophy), history, foreign languages, social sciences, mathematics, and natural sciences.

**Need-based financial aid.** Financial aid given to students who have demonstrated financial need.

**Private college** Institutions operated on a not for profit basis.

**Proprietary College** A private institution operated by its owners for profit.

**Public college or university** An institution that is supported by taxes and other public revenue and governed by a county, state or federal government.

**Upper division** The Junior and Senior years of study.

**Work Study** An agreement by which a student combines employment and college studies as a means of paying for college. Usually it is on campus work.

## Appendix A – US Post-High School Education

