

College Planning Guide

2011-2012

**Notre Dame High School
Guidance Department**

September, 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The formal process of selecting a college begins in junior year. The process can be challenging, confusing, and at times very stressful. **The College Planning Guide** has been developed to assist both students and parents as they go through the process of being accepted at the school of their choice. This guide will serve as a reference and should be kept in an accessible place until a final decision has been made and a deposit is sent to one particular college.

It is very important that each student knows what to expect as they go through the college search process, but it is also helpful for parents. As parents, you can help by reinforcing what your child will hear through the guidance office by familiarizing yourselves with the information contained in this guide and encouraging your child to ask questions about himself or herself and what he/she would like to do in the future.

It should be noted, that this guide does not answer all the questions concerning college admissions. However, we do hope that this information will provide you with a starting point as your child begins their journey in life after high school. If you have been through the process before, this guide should serve as a quick review of the process.

The school counselor will meet with all juniors periodically throughout the year to keep them informed of important dates and time lines in the college selection process. All juniors will be interviewed individually and have an opportunity to do a college search based on information they share with their counselor. They are encouraged to share this with their parents/guardians because the counselor will work closely with your child in preparing, selecting, and applying to possible colleges. The guidance office is available to assist you through this process and if you need to ask questions, please feel free to contact us at 570-424-9118.

Sincerely,

Mr. John Musyt
Guidance Counselor

Mrs. Wanda Lasher
Guidance Secretary

I. Time Line for Career and College Planning for Juniors

- September** - Begin to explore possible careers and prepare for PSAT/NMSQT Test.
- October** - PSAT/NMSQT should be taken.
College information night for parents.
College Fair at ESU.
- November** - Talk to adults (teachers, relatives, professionals) about their career choices and school choices.
- December** - PSAT/NMSQT results are returned and discussed.
- January** - Information on SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests along with ACT Tests will be discussed in classes.
- February** - Colleges recommend that the SAT be taken at least once in the spring of Junior year and at least once in the fall of Senior year. Test dates for the SATs and the ACT are available on line and in the guidance office.
- March** - If you have not registered for a spring SAT test you should do so now. Course selections for Senior year should be taken seriously. Remember college's take into consideration accelerated and AP Courses; challenge yourself but do not set yourself up for failure.
- April** - Consider if you want to take another SAT test in June. If you are considering Early Decision check out exactly what your intended college requires and meet their deadlines. Attend Junior Open House programs.
- May** - Evaluate the colleges that interest you (keeping in mind such factors as geographic location, size of the school, costs, tuition, room and board, travel expenses, fees), and courses of study. College web sites will supply you with the most up-dated information, but the counselor can also help you.

- June/July** - Attend any open house or preview programs
- August** - Try to visit the colleges that are of most interest to you, and try to narrow your choices to 3 to 5 schools by September.

II. Sources of Information About Colleges

College Handbook – This book provides a brief description about a college, but the more up-to-date information will be found in the catalog of the college, or at their web site.

College Catalogs – Some colleges send copies of their school catalogs to high schools. These are available in the Guidance Office for student use. Students may also write to colleges requesting that information be sent to them. Usually a view book, not a catalog, will be sent in reply to this request.

College Web Site – This source of information is usually the most up-to-date information on the college. A student will not only learn about the school and its programs, but might also take a virtual tour of the campus and even have access to an on-line application.

Choices Guidance Program – This is a computer based college information system that the counselor will use in helping a student explore possible college majors and options.

Visit By College Representatives – Colleges will often send admission reps to visit high schools to talk with prospective students interested in their college. These visits usually take place in the fall. The schedule for these visits are found on the high school web site, in the guidance office, and on the daily announcements. Representatives usually come supplied with copies of their college view book, catalog, and application.

College Visit – Most College Representatives recommend a personal visit to their campus. This affords candidates the opportunity to observe facilities and to take a brief look at the life of the college. It also allows prospective students the chance to talk informally with students attending the college. Some colleges will arrange over-night visits and some colleges require an interview.

College Open House Programs – Most colleges sponsor Open House Programs for prospective students to give them an overview of their campus. The program usually begins with a welcome from the President and comments by the Admissions Director. Campus tours are available and program/department presentations are held throughout the day. Financial Aid usually offers a general information session and organizations are usually always represented.

College Fairs – Usually several colleges meet in a central location and set up an information table for prospective students and parents. Literature on majors, clubs, organizations, financial aid and special programs along with applications are available for students to take. In October there is the Monroe County College Fair at ESU, the Northampton County Fair at Northampton Community College, and Lehigh County Fair at Lehigh Community College.

Students Attending College – A very valuable source of information is to talk to students currently enrolled at a particular college. Graduates often return to their high schools for a visit and this affords the opportunity for a first-hand appraisal of a college.

III. Admissions Procedures and Terminology

Regular Admissions: Most colleges require applications to be submitted before a specific **deadline date** at which time the admissions committee begins to consider the credentials of all applicants. Notification of a decision is usually in the spring with many colleges replying on/or about April 1st.

Rolling Admissions: Several colleges operate on a system where by each applicant is notified of their acceptance or rejection as soon as an applicant's admission file is complete. Notification usually occurs four to six weeks after the application is submitted and provided no further information is needed to complete the process.

Early Decision: A number of colleges follow a procedure by which a student may apply to his/her **first-choice** college early in their senior year with notification of an acceptance or rejection in December.

Some colleges restrict Early Decision candidates to only one application. This means, if you are an Early Decision applicant at such a school, you cannot apply for admission to any other college before you receive a reply from the school to which you have applied for Early Decision. Other colleges allow an applicant to file applications with other colleges, **but** if the application

under Early Decision is accepted all applications to other colleges must be withdrawn.

Candidates who are not accepted under a colleges Early Decision Plan are usually considered with the candidates' permission to be considered under regular admissions procedures. Applicants should check to see what percentage of an incoming class is generally accepted under an Early Decision Plan.

Early Action: This is a plan used by several competitive colleges, which encourages applicants to submit their application early in the fall of senior year. Consideration is based on all work completed through the end of junior year. It is similar to Early Decision; however, Early Action has two main differences:

1. If accepted, a student who has filed an Early Action application is free to file applications for admission to other colleges, and any deposits or fees required to hold a place in the class can be deferred to May 1st.
2. An applicant who is denied admission under Early Action may reapply for consideration under general application procedures. At this time additional test scores and senior grades can be submitted and in some cases the decision may be favorable.

Be sure to read and understand the terms of any application before you submit the form.

Early Notification: Some colleges have a process whereby an applicant may elect to be notified at different times of the senior year by choosing certain deadline dates. The dates vary by college so it is best to check the college's catalog regarding this. Students may apply to other colleges and are not obligated to attend the college to which they applied on an Early Notification basis, but they are required to advise the college of their intent to enroll or withdraw at an earlier date. In most cases, applicants will be required to submit a nonrefundable deposit within two weeks of their notification of admission.

Candidate's Reply Date: Many colleges will not mail out acceptances until early April and agree to wait until May 1st to require an accepted candidate to reply to college offers. This agreement enables students to wait for replies without feeling that they must commit themselves to one college before knowing all of the alternatives.

Qualified Acceptance: Occasionally a college postpones action on an applicant and will suggest that the applicant pursue a particular course in its summer session. Upon satisfactory completion of this course, the college agrees to accept the student for its regular degree programs at the beginning of the fall or spring semester.

Waiting List: In addition to accepting and rejecting applicants, many colleges place students on a waiting list for admission. The college is telling them that there are not enough places on campus for all of the qualified students. As accepted applicants decide to attend other colleges, the school will offer their places to students from the waiting list. Inevitably, a certain percentage of those originally accepted choose to study somewhere else, so that a percentage of those on the waiting list may receive acceptances. Note that being placed on a waiting list does not guarantee you an acceptance.

IV. College Visits

The purpose of a college visit is to provide you and your family with a firsthand look at a school where you may be spending the next four years. It allows you to discuss your college plans with a college representative while formulating ideas about the people, programs, facilities, and resources available to you.

Helpful Hints:

1. Plan your visit in advance. Call or write the admissions office to set up an appointment and indicate your areas of interest.
2. Visit when school is in session. (Open House programs are good for an over-view of the college but they don't allow time for interviews, class observations, or specific questions).
3. Allow yourself enough time to get a "feel of the campus". A two to three hour visit should give you enough time for a good tour, an interview, and time to sit in on a class or explore financial aid (In general, it's a good idea not to visit more than two colleges on a given day.)
4. **BE ON TIME.**
5. Pick up an application, scholarship forms, view book, and campus map (the map is essential if the college doesn't offer guided tours.)

6. Talk to someone in the financial aid office. Don't hesitate to discuss finances, including scholarships, loans, and work-study opportunities.
7. Feel free to ask for some estimate of your chance to be accepted, but don't expect any firm commitment at this time.
8. Stop in the library. In ten minutes you can learn something about the size and scope of its collections, study facilities, listening rooms, how it is used by the students, etc.
9. Try to sit in on a class to have an opportunity to gauge the academic facilities.
10. Visit a typical residence hall, dining hall, student center, and recreational facilities.
11. Talk to students. It is important to get some idea of the kind of people you will live and work with on campus. If a student guide accompanies you on your tour, feel free to ask him or her about any aspect of college life. Feel free to talk with other students also.

Things to do before your visit.

1. Look through their view book and catalog, or check out their web site focusing on their admission requirements.
2. Consider taking an unofficial copy of your transcript with you.
3. Do some homework on the school.
4. Make sure you know where you are going and allow enough time to get there.

Should your parents accompany you?

This is up to you. Parents are often interested in seeing their child's prospective colleges. Most colleges welcome parents, however, when they interview a prospective student they like to have some time alone with the candidate and then invite parents in for a further word if they wish.

V. College Interviews

Your presence on the campus and your readiness to talk about yourself, your college plans, and to seek information about how this school matches your interest and needs are all important indications of your seriousness and interest in

the college. Also the exchange of information and impressions gained by you and the admissions counselor during the interview should be meaningful.

Admissions interviewers generally look at three areas while interviewing students. First, they are looking at you as a possible student at their school. Secondly, they are looking for your reactions to the physical aspects of the campus and what it offers. Finally, they are considering your chances for admission.

If you request an interview with an admissions counselor or if you are required to have an interview, you can prepare for this in advance. You should read the college catalog or view the college web site so that you will know something about the school and be prepared to ask questions which are not answered in the catalog. Your dress for the interview should be tasteful and comfortable – you are not a college student at the time of the interview.

The fastest way to arrange an appointment for an interview is to telephone the Admissions Office and suggest some convenient dates. The interview is not a test to see how much you know. Its purpose is to enable the admissions counselor to learn about you. You cannot predict the subject matter of the conversation nor can you model your personality for this special performance. It seems that each college representative has his or her own particular way of conducting an interview. Just a reminder that it is very unlikely that the final decision on your admission will depend on what takes place during the interview.

The interviewer will be confirming any information that you have written on your application, therefore, any discrepancies will result in the Admission Committee questioning your sincerity. The most impressive type of student is one who is confident, responsive, and able to carry on an interesting and informative conversation.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Name three adjectives that best describe you?
2. How does your family feel about you going away to school?
3. How did you select this school?
4. What affect has the media on you?
5. What magazines do you read?
6. What is the last book you read outside of school, and why did you select it?
7. What's the most significant activity in which you've participated?
8. Have you had any part-time jobs? Did you enjoy them? What did you do?
9. How does your high school grading system work?

10. Does your school rank its students? If so, where do you rank?
11. What field of study do you plan to major in? Minor?
12. What do you think people do in that field?
13. If your SAT's are low, why do you think they are?
14. Do you know what the average SAT score is for an incoming freshman?
15. If you are asking for financial aid, how do you plan to pay for your college?
16. What career areas have you considered during high school?
17. What do you do in your free time?
18. Do you enjoy your social life? Are you on Face Book or My Space? What would it reveal?

It should be noted that college interviews and college visits are important but they should be made on your own time. A school day taken to visit a college counts as an absence from school. Therefore, you should check the school calendar to make sure you have no other obligations that require school attendance in order to participate.

VI. Time Line for College and Career Planning for Seniors

- August** - Write or call colleges for application forms if you do not have them already. Register for the SATs, SAT II or ACT Tests. Remember all college testing should be completed by December.
- September** - **EARLY DECISION CANDIDATES**
 Should note their deadlines for applying. SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests and ACT registration materials along with guidance information will be distributed. Students are encouraged to register on line by going to either the college Board or ACT web sites. Students will be required to create a resume (which will be used to assist those writing recommendations), and to develop a good college essay. Visit with college representatives that come to our school.
- October** - If you are required to take an SAT Subject test and you have not registered to do so, you must register for the December test date now. Begin filling out your college applications. Visit with college representatives who come to your school and don't forget about the Monroe County College Fair at ESU.

- November -** Watch deadlines for Early Decision and Early Action applications. All college applications should be completed by the Thanksgiving Holiday. Last minute test dates must be considered by this time.
- December -** Last minute applications must be submitted before Christmas. Many regular deadline dates begin in early January.
- January -** As soon as possible after January 1st file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, (FASFA). Near the end of this month when the first semester ends, MID-YEAR GRADE REPORTS are sent by the Guidance Office. Students must notify the Guidance Office as to which colleges are to receive MID-YEAR REPORTS. The report includes the first semester courses and a cumulative GPA and Class Rank for seven semesters. If you are required to submit a CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA it should be done as soon as possible.
- February -** Local scholarship information is coming into the Guidance Office. Finalize these applications and return them by the due date given by the Guidance Office.
- March & - April** Many colleges will be sending out their decision notices. If you are accepted by more than one college, select the one you intend to enroll in and confirm your decision by submitting the necessary paper work. Write to the other colleges that accepted you and inform them of your decision not to attend their school and thank them for their interest in you.
- May -** May 1st is the deadline for submitting your deposit to a college. Deposits not submitted by this time will be viewed as a refusal of admission.

During the second semester of senior year despite “senioritis” and “college acceptances”, it is important to maintain or improve your academic grades. Colleges may look unfavorably upon grades that drop drastically in the second half of senior year and **THEY HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO REVERSE A STUDENT’S ACCEPTANCE.**

VII Procedures for Applying to College

1. Write or call the college admissions office for a catalog and application form. **THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.** If you decide to apply online make sure you read all instructions and download the necessary forms.
2. **Read the Instructions** and the application **carefully.** Supply all the information required from the applicant and parents. Follow the instructions for completing the application and attach either a check or money order to cover the application fee. Application fees vary between \$25.00 and \$85.00 for each application.
3. Seniors may submit their applications directly to the college to which they are applying. **Secondary School Reports** and **Mid-Year Grade Reports** must be submitted to the Guidance Department for processing the required Counselor Recommendations and Official Transcript. If a student wishes to have the Guidance Department review their application before mailing, they must submit the completed application along with the application fee. **Applications will not be accepted in bits and pieces.**

ALL APPLICATIONS REQUIRE AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Guidance Department as to which college or university they are applying. This is done by completing the **TRANSCRIPT REQUEST CARD.** Notre Dame allows each student to receive three free transcripts; then charges \$5.00 for each additional transcript required.

4. If teacher recommendations are required, choose your recommenders carefully. Request their permission to use their names and give them a stamped envelope addressed to the Admissions Office of the College. Teachers may send out teacher recommendations themselves unless otherwise directed by the application instructions.

In asking a teacher for a recommendation be sure to mention the deadline date by which the recommendation is to be submitted. Put a post-it-note with the date on each envelope. Make sure you give your teachers at least three weeks advance notice when requesting a recommendation. If recommendations are needed for several colleges, advise the teachers so they can make copies of their recommendation.

DO NOT FORGET to thank those teachers who write letters of recommendation for you.

NOT ALL COLLEGES ASK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Students will be instructed to complete their applications prior to the Thanksgiving Holiday. Therefore, all necessary materials must be requested and submitted to the guidance department by the second week of November.

ESSAY AND/OR PERSONAL STATEMENT. Some colleges require an essay and/or a personal statement as part of the application process. Others make the essay optional. Colleges use this as a further means of self-expression contained in these writings. It is advisable to go over the rough copy with an English Teacher before submitting your good copy to the college. Keep a copy of your finished essay. It may be used for other applications.

All applications should be printed neatly or typed. Some applications even specify the color of ink to use. **NEVER USE PENCIL UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO. NEVER USE TWO DIFFERENT COLORED INKS.**

VIII Sign up procedure for college visits to Notre Dame.

1. College visits are announced during daily announcements, listed in the Guidance Office, and listed on the Notre Dame web site.
2. Interested students sign up in the Guidance Office at least three school days prior to the scheduled visit.
3. A guidance pass will be written out and distributed during homeroom period on the day of the visit informing students who have signed up when and where the meeting will take place.
4. A student may sign up for a maximum of four college meetings during the semester. **For an additional meeting a student must consult with Mr. Musyt for approval.**
5. Keep in mind that a test, quiz, or presentation scheduled for the time of the college visit takes precedence over any appointment with a college representative.

IX Transcript Fees

When a student formally applies to a college the college will require an **OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT** of their high school grades. Current policy is that the first three transcripts are free and each additional transcript will cost \$5.00. The fee includes the cost of the transcript, mailing, mid-year grades if required, and mailing a final

transcript and certification of graduation. Fees should be submitted along with a completed transcript request card.

X Financial Aid

The following information will give you an overview of the financial aid process. More specific information will be given to you during your senior year when financial aid applications become available.

You may qualify for financial aid that will help you pay for the education you want but cannot afford on your own. For this reason, do not rule out any college on the basis of cost. The only way to know for sure if you are eligible for financial aid is to actually apply for it. Federal, state, institutional and private student aid make higher education available to those who otherwise could not meet rising college costs.

IN DECEMBER OF SENIOR YEAR, YOU WILL BE INVITED TO AN EVENING MEETING IN JANUARY TO DISCUSS FINANCIAL AID.

Determining who will receive aid is not simple. Family income alone will not predict your eligibility. A number of other factors are considered, such as family size, indebtedness, and educational expenses for other family members, **NEED** is the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college and what your family can afford to pay. Since college costs differ, you will be eligible for different amounts of financial aid from different colleges. What changes as costs increase is your need, not what you can pay.

Types of Financial Aid

Basically there are three types of financial aid:

1. **Grants and/or Scholarships.** This is free money that you do not have to repay. Grants are usually awarded on the basis of need. Scholarships may be awarded on the basis of need or some other criteria such as academic achievement, or special talent.
2. **Loans** must be repaid, usually after you have graduated or left school.
3. **Work-Study** involves earning money through a job arranged by the college.

If you receive financial aid, chances are that you will get a **Financial Aid Package** that combines two or three types of aid from various sources. The financial aid administrator at the college will put your package together.

Applying for Financial Aid

There are three basic forms that are used by colleges other than their own form. They are the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. The **College Scholarship Service Financial Aid Profile (CSS Profile)**, and the **Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Form (PHEAA)** which is now included in the FAFSA for the State of Pennsylvania. Check with each college to see which form you need to submit. You can request financial aid information at the same time that you request an application from the college. An important thing to know about financial aid for college is that the guidelines change nearly every year. **Read** all your information on financial aid carefully. **DEADLINES ARE VERY IMPORTANT.**

Find out what the deadlines are and stick to them. Financial aid is usually given on a rolling basis, but usually the earlier the better. FAFSA FORMS and CSS PROFILE FORMS are available on-line and it is recommended that they are filed electronically.

The appropriate forms and fees (if required) should be completed and sent out as soon **AFTER JANUARY 1ST** of senior year, as is possible. You should also make and keep copies of every form that you submit.

There are possible sources of financial aid available to students that are sponsored by the Federal Government, by state, local business, individuals, associations and other private sources. The Internet provides access to several free sources of financial aid or scholarship searches. A few of these sites are www.pheaa.org, www.fastweb.com, www.finaid.org, www.collegeboard.com, www.qocollege.com, and www.ed.gov.

XI SUMMARY

1. **Meet all Deadlines.** They mean what they say.
2. **Keep Copies** of what you submit whenever possible.
3. Allow at least three weeks for the guidance office to process your college application. Remember the applications are processed on a first come basis.
4. Keep the guidance department informed of admission decisions and scholarship offers.

5. In the spring, **INFORM** all colleges that accepted you whether or not you will attend.
6. Give teachers at least three weeks advance notice for writing a letter of recommendation.
7. **INFORM** the teachers who have written your letters of recommendation about the admission decisions you receive from colleges to which you have applied. **DON'T FORGET TO THANK THEM.**
8. **DEADLINES, DEADLINES, DEADLINES**

XII SAMPLE LETTERS

All letters/e-mails should be neatly typed. These letters and e-mails are the first impression that a college will formulate concerning you. You want to be certain that they are neat, coherent and legible.

Sample letters for requesting information, requesting an interview, and withdrawing an application can be found in the Appendix at the end of this document.

These letters are designed to be used as a guide for the student to follow. Feel free to use your own words and/or adjust these samples as you see fit.

Early Decision Candidates

Some colleges allow a student to apply to their school for Early Decision and also to make application to other colleges. If a student is accepted under the Early Decision Plan, the college requires that student to withdraw all applications to other schools. A letter similar to the one above may also be used for this purpose.

XIII Guidance Department names and Numbers

Notre Dame High School Code	391148
School Address	60 Spangenburg Avenue East Stroudsburg, PA 18301
Notre Dame High School Web Site	www.ndhigh.org
Guidance Office Phone	570-424-9118
Guidance Office Fax	570-421-2822
Guidance Counselor	Mr. John Musyt
Guidance Counselor Email	jmusyt@ciu20.org
Guidance Secretary	Mrs. Wanda Lasher
Guidance Secretary Email	wlasher@ciu20.org

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XIV: APPENDIX

**SAMPLE LETTER
REQUESTING COLLEGE INFORMATION**

You're Address

Date

Director of Admissions
(College Name)
Address

Dear Sir:

I am currently a student at Notre Dame High School in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania and I plan to graduate in June of _____.

At the present time I am interested in pursuing a career in the field of psychology and eventually hope to be a private psychologist. Therefore, I would like to request any information you could send me about your Psychology program and your college in general. I am also interested in learning more about your financial aid programs and scholarships, so any information in this area would be appreciated.

I would like to thank you in advance for your help and cooperation and I anxiously await your reply.

Sincerely,

(You're Signature)

(You're Name) Printed

**SAMPLE LETTER
REQUESTNG AN INTERVIEW**

You're Address
DATE

Director of Admissions
(College Name)
Address of College
City, State, Zip

Dear Sir:

I am a senior at Notre Dame High School, in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania and I am planning to visit _____(Name or College/University) between _____(Date). As I am interested in applying for your _____(Name of Program) for the fall of 20____. I would appreciate having an interview and tour of the campus on either _____ or _____(dates), if possible. I will also be applying for financial aid and would appreciate an opportunity to have an interview with a representative of the financial aid office on the same day.

If these dates are inconvenient, I would be able to visit on _____
(alternate date). I shall look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(Your name Signed)

(Your name Typed)

**SAMPLE LETTER
WITHDRAWING AN APPLICATION**

Sometimes circumstances intervene which make it necessary for a student to withdraw an application even before he/she received a decision from a college. Again, it is polite to inform the college of this intention.

Student's Address
DATE

Director of Admissions
Name of College
Address of College
City, State, Zip

Dear Sir:

I am a senior at Notre Dame High School in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.

My application for admission to _____ (Name of College/University) has been filed with you. Since my plans for higher education have changed recently, I would like to withdraw my application for admission at this time.

Please accept my thanks for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature Signed

Your Name Printed or Typed