

**College Selection
Booklet**

For

(Print your name here)

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You probably recall someone telling you that “Senior Year is the greatest year of your Life”. Well it is for most people, but it is also a very stressful time for most seniors. This information packet has been organized to try to take some of that stress away as it relates to your college selection, and serve as a tool to use as you see fit.

The fall of your senior year will probably be one time in your life when your mailbox will receive plenty of use. Colleges are responding to the various questionnaires you may have completed, or they may have noticed something about you that makes them think you might be a good match for them. The student descriptive questionnaire that you completed when you registered for the SAT test or ACT test is now paying off and information is arriving daily.

So many colleges, so many universities, so many options to choose from! Where do I start? How am I going to select a college? They all have view books, brochures, newsletters, web sites, and even DVD/CDs that highlight why their school is the right school to attend. Add to this information the views of your parents, teachers, school counselor, and your friends and relatives and the task seems insurmountable, especially if you are applying to several schools.

The following pages contain some questions and tips that should make the entire process a little less confusing. Use the following pages as a notebook, but get started now. The process will not get easier by waiting until the last minute, so get started now. This way you will have time to think about your decision and be confident that the choice you make is the right one for you.

What factors are important to you in selecting a school?

Try to clear your head for a moment and don't think about how close to the beach you might be or where the nearest ski slope is. Instead, take a look at yourself, your likes and dislikes, your personality, your strengths and weaknesses.

What location is best for your?

Think about the campus environment.

___ **Urban** ___ **Suburban** ___ **Small Town** ___ **Rural**

Why?

Are you looking for the advantages of a large city? Are the shopping malls and neighborhoods of a suburban setting for you? Do you prefer the peace and quiet of a small town or the solitude of being out in the country? Look at your choices in terms of how they relate to you. Remember that you are looking at the next four to five years of your life.

How often do you want to come home?

Distances can sometimes create unexpected problems for college students.

_____ Whenever I want. If this sounds like you, then you should consider schools that are within an hour or two radius of your home.

_____ Maybe on the weekends when the football team plays on the road. If this is you, stay within a four hour radius of your home. Too much driving and unpredictable weather will have a negative impact on your academics.

_____ Only for major holidays or family events. If this is you, and plane tickets are not readily accessible consider no more than a days drive (usually six to eight hours).

What type of school are your looking for?

Once again, take a good look at yourself. Be honest. How are your study habits? Are your grades a true indication of your performance? Do you match up with the characteristics of the schools you have looked at?

_____ **Public** _____ **Private** _____ **Catholic** _____ **All Women**

_____ **2 Year** _____ **4 Year** _____ **Trade or Technical**

What size campus is right for you?

Remember Notre Dame is a small Catholic School with a total enrollment of about 250 students.

_____ **Up to 1000 students** _____ **1001 to 2500 students**

_____ **2501 to 5000 students** _____ **5001 to 10000 students**

_____ **10001 to 15000 students** _____ **More than 15000**

Also remember that large means more than just a lot of students. It means a variety of people from different parts of the world. It means professors who are well known, who have been highlighted in journals and publications, and individuals that usually have graduate teaching assistants. Large also means more options in class selections, more activities and services and a larger alumni base. But, it also means larger classes, waiting in lines to see professors, to eat lunch, to register for classes. It may also mean learning how to ask for help or seek out extra help as soon as you need it. It is unlikely that someone will approach you to see if you understand what is going on.

Smaller means less students and smaller classes. Professors who probably know your name and if you were in their class. Smaller can be like Notre Dame where you can get as involved as you want to or get to know everything about the people you associate with on a daily basis. This may or may not be a selling point depending on your personality.

If you are undecided that is fine. Just visit some different-sized campuses to get a feel for the environment that is right for you.

How competitive is the school you are looking at? Competitive does not only refer to the demands you have to meet to get accepted, but also the nature of the work that will have to be maintained in order to remain in good standing once admitted.

Make some notes on the competitiveness or the reputation of the school you are looking at.

There's a lot of pressure to get into the most prestigious college or to go to a better school than the kid next door, but be honest with yourself and look at your high school record and say to yourself, "Is my high school record real, inflated, or sporadic? Have I developed good study habits? Have I developed a support system that I can't live without?"

What program offerings are you looking for?

What major or majors are you going to pursue?

If you know the answer to these questions do a little introspection. Is this really where my interests lie? Have I performed to the best of my ability in related classes while in high school? Is my personality suited to this field of study? Why do I want to do this? How long have I been thinking about this?

If you are undecided, that's okay. Many students opt to try out several different fields before focusing on a specific major. Go back and explore all the different things you considered doing since the beginning of your sophomore year. What courses did you do well in? What achievements are you proud of? What service or community projects were you involved in? Try to connect these with a few possible broad categories, e.g. mathematics, natural sciences, business, etc.

How much can you afford to pay for your education?

Unless you and your parents can pay for your education outright, this is a difficult question to answer. You should not select a school by its cost initially, but dollars will be a serious consideration in your final selection.

For now, select a school that meets your needs based on the previous questions and your research. Make sure you discuss finances with your parents, and try to find a range that everyone feels is realistic for your family. Write it down. Don't assume you can't go to the school of your choice because financial aid information will not be known until March or April.

Most college students receive some form of aid. Explore any and all sources available to you. Check with the guidance office. Research sources of aid on the internet. Go to the library. Finally, file your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1st, and do not miss any deadlines. Sometimes total costs are deceiving and the final cost is not the barrier it appears to be.

\$ _____ to \$ _____

What other considerations are important to you?

List any special interests or needs you would like to explore while in college. For example: Are you an athlete? What level can you compete on? Do you have special talents in art, music, theatre, etc.? Do you need special services? Are there supports you might seek out like tutoring, counseling, career exploration, etc.? List anything that might be important to you in this section.

Now summarize your information.

I am looking for a school that has most or all of the following characteristics:

Location: _____

Distance from home: _____

Type of school: _____

Size: _____

Competitiveness/reputation: _____

Programs/major(s): _____

Cost: _____

Now share your thoughts and concerns and discuss your summary with your parents and other adults you respect. Chances are they will have some good insights and suggestions that will be helpful to you. Remember to keep it simple and involve only your parents, guidance counselor, and trusted friends. Too much advice will present conflicting information and a lot of authoritative advice that might be difficult to sift through.

NOW YOU ARE READY TO FIND YOUR SCHOOL

Make a list.

Start by going back through all that mail you have received. If there is nothing there check out the *College Handbook* or *Baron's Profiles of American Colleges*. If this is a little confusing have the guidance counselor do a college search for you or talk to a teacher to see what schools they would recommend based on the summary you came up with. Remember these are good sources of information even if you don't have a major in mind.

When you find a school, ask yourself: "Does this school have most of the characteristics I am looking for?"

The schools I am interested in are:

Now it's time to contact these schools.

Call, write, or e-mail the admissions office and ask for a view book and an application for admission. Also ask for information on financial aid, scholarships and the major you intend to pursue.

If you are planning to apply on line check the application over and if possible download a copy. This will be helpful to you when you are ready to begin filling out the information requested.

Now carefully browse through the information and start comparing the schools in more detail.

Try to narrow your list to three to five schools. Then based on the information you have and the opinions of those you trust try to evaluate your chances of being accepted.

Factors of Importance
(Number each with
#1 being most important)

Colleges to Search
(Write the name of possible
colleges)

Location

Distance from home

Type of School

Size

Reputation/
Competitiveness

Program/Major

Cost

Add any additional factors that are important to you under cost.
Now list the names of the schools to correspond to your numbers.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Now assign a number from 1 to 10, reflecting the scale of importance to you. For example, if size is very important you might give it a 9, if the type of school is of little importance you might give it a 2, etc. Now rate each school, on each of the factors, according to the factor scale of importance. Then total everything up and place that number after your school name. Now you have a better idea of your schools.

Try to find out if any other students from Notre Dame have attended the schools you are considering. These graduates would be a good source of what life on campus and in the classroom is really like. Also check if any of the colleges will be sending representatives to visit Notre Dame. The more personal your contacts are the better your chances of being remembered when your application is reviewed.

Start applying for admission.

Apply early in your senior year. This will give you plenty of time to respond to requests for more information, to retake your SAT or ACT tests, and really focus on your senior grades.

Visit the colleges.

It is strongly recommended that you visit the colleges you are most interested in. Many schools will provide accommodations for students who travel a distance to see their campus. Your parents however, will have to find their own accommodations. There are also open house programs in the fall with special programs designed just for seniors.

Suggestions for when you visit:

Try to talk to a student. Tour guides usually like to interact with the people in their group or just stop a student you see and ask a question.

Check out the student center, the library, and the cafeteria. Most colleges have various dining options so have a drink or get a snack and sample the atmosphere and the types of students you see in these surroundings.

See if you can talk to an admission representative to find out specific requirements, housing options, security on the campus, and anything else that is important to you.

If you have an interview, make a list of questions and ask them. Admission representatives will definitely have questions for you, so be prepared. Be yourself, and be prepared to talk about yourself – strengths, weaknesses, special abilities, achievements, and goals.

Take some notes on your initial impressions and reactions to the campus. Ask yourself, “Do I feel comfortable walking around the campus? Do the students look like the sort of people I’d like to make friends with?”

These notes can be jotted down after your visit, but keep track of them because they may be helpful later in the year when you have to make your final decision. Your notes should include the following information:

- School Name and Address

- Admission Contact

- Admission policy

 - Rolling admission vs. admission by deadline.

- Important dates

 - Application deadline

 - Scholarship deadline

 - Financial Aid deadline

Tuition/Housing deposit deadline (refundable or not refundable).

Standardized tests you need to take.

Phone Log

Record phone calls you make about the status of your application or admission questions, as well as the name of the person with whom you spoke and the date.

Pay attention to details. There will be a lot of them. Make a calendar just for your college information. Transfer deadline dates, SAT or ACT dates, dates of visits, phone contacts, application mailings, etc.

Try to be patient. Senior year is stressful enough so don't add to it by waiting until the last minute. Once you have applied, focus on being a senior and wait until you hear from the college.

What happens next:

Once you have applied and all your supporting documentation has been received, an admissions committee will meet to review your application. At some schools a computer will make the decision. If a school has a rolling admission policy, you can expect to hear something about the status of your application in about six weeks. If a school operates on an admission by deadline basis you just have to wait until their notification date. In either case, if you have questions call the office of admissions and if additional information is requested, submit it as soon as possible.

What if I don't get accepted?

It is unusual to be offered admission to each of the schools you apply to. But somehow, knowing that doesn't make a rejection any

easier to take. Remember this is not a judgment of your self-worth. Secondly, chances are good that you'll have some alternatives.

If you feel your situation deserves special consideration, or you believe something has been overlooked in the review process, call the admissions office. Sometimes you can request a re-evaluation on the basis of the additional information or by requesting a change of major. Remember it will depend on the policy of that school. But, before you call, ask yourself honestly, "Do I really feel something has been overlooked? Or am I just disappointed in a decision that really didn't surprise me?"

If you are denied admission to your major of choice you will probably be offered another program of study or an alternate campus to consider. If this happens to you try to be open-minded in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the options. If they don't satisfy you, call an admission counselor and see if there are other options within their system. Remember they do want to see their students succeed, and they do have your future educational interests in mind.

What if I am accepted at more than one school?

Congratulations! Congratulations! Congratulations!

You've been accepted. Now the moment of decision is here. If you have followed the outline in these previous pages, chances are good that you'll end up making a good selection. Go back and check your notes and impressions. Go back to the chart in this booklet and check the factors and ratings you came up with. Look at the catalogs and match your profile against their admission criteria. Then talk to your parents, counselor, and anyone else you respect on this subject.

Then make the match that is right for you.

My college options are:

My responses to the offers:

My final choice is:

Congratulations you've done it. It will get a lot easier from this point on. However, be sure to follow all the steps your college gives you in completing the admission process. Deadlines are very important especially when it comes to financial aid and housing, so follow these instructions carefully and if you have any questions call the school directly.

COLLEGE CALENDAR CHECKLIST

AUGUST

- _____ Narrow your college choices to three to five schools.
- _____ Request admissions information and college catalogs.
- _____ Set-up appointments for college visits and interviews.

SEPTEMBER

- _____ Register for your SAT Reasoning Test, ACT, or SAT Subject tests.
- _____ Meet with college reps who may visit your school.
- _____ Remember that you must take college tests at least six weeks before the deadline for scores to be submitted to colleges.
- _____ Create a resume of your past experiences beginning with grade nine.

OCTOBER

- _____ Take the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT exam if you have not done so or feel it is necessary.
- _____ Work on admissions application essays and have someone proof it.
- _____ Visit your top school choices. Take notes, interview students, take a tour, set up an interview.
- _____ Some private colleges may require you to complete an initial CSS/Financial Aid Profile at this time.

- _____ Attend the local College Fairs at either East Stroudsburg University, Northampton Community College, or Lehigh Community College.
- _____ Set-up an appointment with the guidance counselor to discuss your progress if you have not had an appointment by now.
- _____ Meet with college reps who visit our school.
- _____ Consider completing a FastWeb scholarship search at www.fastweb.com and begin checking with the guidance office for scholarship information.

NOVEMBER

- _____ Take the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, or ACT test if necessary.
- _____ Finalize your college applications and try to have them completed before the Thanksgiving Holiday.
- _____ Meet with college reps who visit our school.
- _____ Make sure you have established the deadline dates for the colleges you are applying to. Note admission deadlines for early applications, early decision, and financial aid.
- _____ Have you checked with the guidance office on any new scholarships that may have come in?

DECEMBER

- _____ Take the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests or ACT test if necessary.

- _____ Make sure you know the deadline dates for submitting your financial aid information.

- _____ Any and all college applications must be submitted by Christmas. Many colleges begin closing applications on January 1st, or January 15th or February 1st. **NOTE: It MAY TAKE UP TO FIFTEEN WORKING DAYS FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION TO REACH THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE THIS TIME OF THE YEAR.**

JANUARY

- _____ Begin to organize your income tax return information so you will be able to complete your FAFSA form (especially parents). Note it is recommended that the FAFSA is submitted on-line.

- _____ Complete FAFSA. Early completion maximizes your chance for aid. Complete CSS/Financial Aid Profile if your school requires it. On-line completion is recommended.

- _____ Make sure any mid-year grade reports sent to you or contained in your application packet are given to the guidance office.

- _____ Prepare for your mid-semester exams. Your mid-year grades may be the difference in an acceptance to the college of your choice.

- _____ If you are unsure of your college choices an appointment with the counselor should be scheduled ASAP as college options are closing quickly.

- _____ Have you checked on scholarship information recently?

- _____ Research taking Advanced Placement exams.

FEBRUARY

- _____ Double check your deadline dates for submitting your financial aid information.

- _____ Did you submit your FAFSA form yet? Remember it can be sent electronically or through the mail. Electronic completion is recommended.
- _____ February 15th is the usual deadline for college application submission and financial aid forms.
- _____ Local scholarships are usually coming into the guidance office this time of the year, are you eligible for any?
- _____ Rank your finalized list of colleges.

MARCH

- _____ Make sure all financial aid information and forms were submitted.
- _____ Complete any scholarship forms you may still have and check on any new scholarships via the guidance office or internet.
- _____ Look for your Student Aid Report (SAR) in the mail or on-line if you sent it electronically. This contains federal financial aid information.
- _____ Submit tax forms to the financial aid office if requested,
- _____ If you are planning to take any Advanced Placement exams make sure you have registered with the guidance office.

APRIL

- _____ Check your mail for college acceptance and financial aid award letters.
- _____ Review all your notes to make a confident decision on your college selection and discuss your choice with your parents.

_____ Review financial aid offers and direct any questions or concerns to the college financial aid director.

_____ Make your final decision and send in a deposit by the deadline.

MAY

_____ May 1st is the absolute deadline for your deposit to be received by the college you plan to attend. If you requested an extension or have not yet submitted your deposit you may jeopardize your acceptance.

_____ Notify colleges you will not be attending and thank them for their time and consideration of you as a perspective student.

_____ Advanced Placement exams are given in high schools the first two weeks of May. Specific exams are scheduled for specific dates and times.

_____ Prepare for your final examinations. This is actually your first step in preparing for your college classes in the fall.

_____ Finalize summer school or summer job plans.

JUNE

_____ Make sure your graduation requirements have been met. Failure to graduate may jeopardize your college acceptance.

_____ Any final grade reports mailed to you from your colleges must be turned into the guidance office.