

Dear Parents and Students:

The motto of Sacred Heart-Griffin High School is “Academic Excellence in a Community of Faith”. A vital aspect of our mission is the academic preparedness of our students to meet the educational challenges of their future. Simply stated, our goal is to prepare our students for college and beyond.

One of the most significant decisions a high school student will make is where he/she will attend college. This decision will set the course for a person’s lifetime. The college selection process is often an arduous one, and the staff of the Office of Guidance and Counseling of Sacred Heart-Griffin is committed to providing useful information to students and parents to facilitate this process.

The Focus on College binder has been developed to assist students and parents in making college-related decisions. Topics in this guide include admissions criteria, time lines, test scores, scholarships, financial aid, and the college application process.

The college selection process is actually searching for a match between the student’s abilities, aspirations, and preferences and a school which provides for the needs of the student. There are many variables which influence college selection including cost, location, number of students, availability of desired major, campus life, and selectivity. This Focus on College binder is designed to guide students and parents through the process. However, this information is not intended to be a substitute for the personal advice, mentoring, and relationship between our guidance staff and students. We are dedicated to personally assisting in this important process.

The Guidance and Counseling staff looks forward to working with you over this next year. Please feel free to contact us as you go through the college selection process.

Sincerely,

William E. Moredock, Ph.D.
Director of Student and Family Services

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COLLEGE PLANNING TIME LINE - JUNIOR YEAR

Junior year is a critical year in the college planning and selection process. You will be an active participant in this process. During this year, you will take the ACT and/or SAT. You should also begin to contact the colleges you may be interested in attending. There are several resources available to you in your college search. It is important to be in close contact with your guidance counselor so he/she can show you these resources and help direct you in this important process. The ultimate goal is to find the best college match for you based on your abilities, interests, and aspirations.

Junior Year

Ongoing Activities

- Research colleges and universities using college web sites.
- Attend open houses and college visit programs hosted by colleges and universities.
- Meet with college representatives visiting SHG.
- Continue volunteer and extracurricular activities.

October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT at SHG.
- Attend the Capital Area Education Fair. (Opportunity for juniors and seniors to meet with a variety of college reps.)

December

- Start reviewing for the ACT/SAT or consider signing up for a review class.

February

- Select classes for senior year, keeping in mind that colleges will look at your senior schedule. The courses selected should be comparable to the first three years.
- Consider and plan college visits for Easter break.
- Register for the March SAT and/or the April ACT.
- Explore the possibility of attending a college or university summer program.
- Complete a scholarship search on the web: fastweb.com, wiredscholar.com and collegezone.com are recommended sites.

COLLEGE PLANNING TIME LINE - SENIOR YEAR

It's finally here, your senior year! Senior year is the culmination of all of your college planning. Now is the time to narrow your list of colleges and apply to your top college choices. In addition, you should begin to apply for scholarships that would be most applicable to you. If necessary, you should retake the ACT and/or SAT.

Senior year is an exciting and memorable time for most students. However, it is important to remember that doing well academically continues to be essential. Colleges place a strong emphasis on senior year course selection and on your performance in these classes. All colleges request a student's final transcript to ensure that all requirements were met and that your academic work ethic continued the whole year.

Senior Year

Ongoing Activities

- Continue search and application process for scholarships.
- Continue volunteer and extracurricular activities.

August

- Complete a scholarship search if you have not already done so.
- Register for the September ACT, if necessary.
- Review career plans and decide what college major you want to pursue.
- Narrow down your college list. The typical senior applies to four or five colleges.

September

- Request applications or download from college web sites.
- Prepare a resume highlighting your academic, extracurricular, work, and volunteer activities to give to those writing letters of recommendation for you.
- Finalize fall college visits. Consider an overnight campus stay.
- Register for the October ACT, if needed.
- Register for the October or November SAT I or II, if necessary.
- ACT test is offered.
- Meet with college representatives visiting SHG.

October

- Visit college campuses.
- SAT I and II tests are offered.
- ACT test is offered.
- Attend the Capital Area Education Fair.
- Begin application process. If applying online, notify your counselor so a transcript can be sent.
- Register for December SAT I and II and/or ACT, if necessary.
- Meet with college representatives visiting SHG.

November

- Make campus visits.
- SAT I and II tests are offered.
- Continue the college application process (watch the deadlines!).

December

- SAT I and II tests are offered.
- ACT test is offered.
- Complete college applications.
- Continue applying for scholarships.

January

- Complete the FAFSA online or by mail after January 1st.
- Have 7th semester grades sent to colleges if needed.

February/March/April

- Evaluate offers of admission.
- Consider making one last tour of college campuses if you are still undecided.
- Send in required deposits.
- Send thank-you notes for scholarships to those who wrote recommendations or to admission counselors who were particularly helpful.

May

- Make your final college decision by May 1st.
- Have final transcript sent to your college of choice. (You will be asked to provide this information in late April or early May.)
- Notify the colleges whose offers of admission you are declining.
- **GRADUATION - Best of Luck to You!!**

COLLEGE TESTING

PLAN - A practice test for the ACT that provides an estimated ACT composite score range as well as information to assist students with their career and college major planning. Students take the PLAN in the fall of their sophomore year.

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) - A practice test for the SAT which is also used to determine National Merit Semifinals. Students take the PSAT in the fall of their junior year.

ACT (American College Test) - A college entrance exam that is generally taken during junior and/or senior year.

SAT I (Scholastic Aptitude Test) - A college entrance exam that is generally taken during junior and/or senior year.

SAT II (Subject Tests) - One-hour tests that measure a student's knowledge in specific subject areas. These tests are required by some of the more selective colleges and may be taken by freshman through senior year high school students.

AP Tests (Advanced Placement) - Tests that are taken upon the completion of an advanced placement course. A student may gain college credit depending on their performance on the tests.

143965 - SHG=S HIGH SCHOOL CODE FOR ALL TESTING

What is the difference between the ACT and the SAT I?

How they are scored

The ACT has four sections: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. You are given a score (1-36) for each test, as well as a composite score (1-36). There is no penalty for guessing on the ACT, and therefore, no answers should be left blank.

An optional writing test has been added to the ACT. While this portion of the test is not required, students should check with the colleges/universities they are interested in attending for their requirements on the writing portion.

The SAT has two sections: Verbal and Math. You are given a score (200- 800) for each section. The two scores are added together, with 1600 being the highest possible score. There is a penalty for wrong answers on the SAT, so unless you are able to make an educated guess by eliminating one or more of the answer choices, you should leave the question(s) blank.

How the test scores are reported

When you register for either test, you have the option of having your score sent directly to the colleges of your choice, or you may choose not to send scores to colleges until you have seen your results first. With the ACT, you can choose which scores you would like to have sent to the college(s); however, with the SAT, *all* scores are sent to the college(s).

Both the ACT and the SAT provide test preparation on their web sites (ACT www.act.org ; SAT www.collegeboard.com). In addition, there are four basic options for test preparation:

- the free booklet distributed by ACT and SAT that is part of the registration packet
- test preparation manuals
- computer software
- classes or individual tutoring

COLLEGE SELECTION CRITERIA

Beginning your college search may seem overwhelming. When considering a college, it is important to choose a college that will not only meet your educational goals but one that will be an overall good fit for you. You should consider a college where you will feel most comfortable based on your interests and personal goals. The following is a list of items that you may want to consider as you begin your college search:

General Factors to Consider:

- Admissions criteria
- Admission notification process
- Application deadline
- Campus Security
- Course offerings and availability
- Core requirements
- Cost
- Extracurricular activities (athletics, clubs, etc.)
- Financial aid availability
- Four-year attrition rate
- Geographic location
- Graduation rate
- Housing options
- School mission
- Student/faculty relations
- Student population (gender, cultural, academic)
- Support services
- Variety of majors, pre-professional programs

Other Factors to Consider:

- Academic atmosphere
- Academic ratings
- Advanced Placement (AP) credit
- Career counseling availability
- Career placement rate
- Cars on campus and transportation options
- Computer access, availability, and facilities
- Fraternities and sororities (presence or lack of presence)
- Library access and facilities
- Personal counseling services
- Religious affiliation, facilities, and groups
- Requirements of student behavior
- Study abroad programs
- Study facilities
- Undergraduate research
- Work-study options

SELECTIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Admission to highly selective schools has become more difficult with each passing year. Every year, well-qualified students are denied admission to the most selective schools. It has become nearly impossible to predict the decision of admission committees. Many books, articles, and essays have been written to try to give some insight into the process.

The goals of the most prestigious schools remain the same. They strive to create a class of students who are bright and can bring something unusual to the school. Some, but not all, of the criteria used are: personal, geographic, and ethnic diversity. Following are some more criteria:

- The high school transcript is very important. Grades and course selection are very relevant in the college admission process. Highly selective colleges want students to take the most rigorous course pattern possible. Schools like to see students stretch themselves by taking Advanced Placement courses whenever possible.
- A student's transcript is also a determining factor. The transcript is evaluated to see if the student finishes high school in an upward trend.
- Extracurricular activities can influence the college admissions process. Your activities should demonstrate your ability to take a leadership role. Colleges are looking for a strong commitment to the activities that the student has chosen.
- Highly selective schools place great emphasis on test scores. Both the ACT and the SAT I and II are used to make the decision. A student should take both tests as the formats are very different. Students sometime find that they perform better on one test than on the other.
- Essays can make the difference between acceptance and rejection. This is the time that the candidate can demonstrate not only his/her written skills but also give the admission committee the opportunity to have added insight into the candidate.
- Recommendations are a significant part of the college application process. They often give a different perspective about the candidate and can strengthen an application. The student should give the teacher/counselor enough time and information to write a thoughtful recommendation by including a resume of pertinent information.

The above criteria have different weight assigned to them dependent upon the school. The most important thing to remember is to meet all deadlines in a timely manner and to give the entire process enough time and energy to present yourself in the best possible manner.

Assessing your list of colleges

As you develop a list (mental or otherwise) of colleges that interest you, be sure you can answer these questions about them.

The basics

- Where is the college? Can you locate it on a map? Is it too close to home? Is it too far? Is it too cold or too hot there?
- Have you taken the course work the college requires for admission?
- What size is the college? How many students are undergraduates?
- 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?
- What type of financial aid is available?

Where would you fit in?

- What are the college scores for the SAT or ACT? 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 the colleges' Web sites, read the guidebooks, and look at their literature

- 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? At convenient times?
- Are there special programs that interest you (study abroad, internships, etc.)?
- What is the 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 the 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?

Admissions process

- When are applications due?
- Does the college accept the Common Application? If so, does it require supplemental forms?
- What does the application contain? Are essays required?

- Is an interview suggested or required? Is an interview available from staff or alumni?
- When may you visit the college? What is its policy regarding campus visits?
- What are the financial aid deadlines? What financial aid forms are required?

Now answer these questions

- Am I a strong candidate for admission to this college?
- If I am not a strong candidate, what are my chances?
- Do I want to visit this college?
- What additional information do I need?

Source: Susan Staggars, Cary Academy, North Carolina College Counseling Sourcebook, 4th Edition. 2007 The College Board. All rights reserved. Permission granted to copy this for educational purposes.

How to get the most out of a college fair: Tips for students from the Associated Colleges of the Midwest

Going to a college fair

- Take along a pen and a small notebook.
- Take a bag to carry the brochures you pick up.
- Print out some address labels with your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, high school, and year of graduation. Spend your time at the college tables asking questions, not filling out contact cards!
- When you arrive, check out the floor plan and find out where the tables for your top-choice colleges are located so you can go directly to them.
- Write your most important questions down in advance so you don't forget them.
- Check on whether any information sessions, such as financial aid, are being offered. Interested? Budget your time accordingly.
- Jot down notes about a college while your memory is fresh, such as right after visiting the table.
- Pick up the business cards of any representatives you talk to, so you can contact them if you have any more questions.

After you get home

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

Source: Associated Colleges of the Midwest (www.acm.edu)

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College Visit Days

Seniors who must visit a college during school time are allowed one college day. A second college day may be approved at the discretion of the college counselor and/or administrator. If the college is local, a half day is allowed.

Prior to college visits, seniors must obtain a college day form from the Guidance Office. This form must be signed by the student's teachers and parent and returned to the Guidance Office at least one day prior to the scheduled visit. Upon returning, students should be prepared to supply verification of the college visit.

During the second semester, students may only visit colleges to which they have already submitted an application. College days will not be approved on days immediately prior to or following school breaks (i.e., Christmas Break, Easter Break, etc.). College visit days are excluded from the ten day limit for absences, as well as the five day absence limit for final exam exemption.

College Visit Days will not be approved during the month of May.

Questions to ask college representatives

College reps, as well as college students, admissions counselors, and faculty, genuinely enjoy talking to high school students. They like to share their ideas about their college, and they all appreciate students who have thought about the college and want to know more than is in the course catalog, in the viewbook, or on the Web site. They like thoughtful questions, and their answers can help you make a good college match. Ask questions of interest to you in the following categories:

Students

- How would you characterize the majority of students?
- From what economic background are the majority of students?
- Are there clubs, activities, or housing that are minority related?
- What do students like most about the college? Like least?
- Has the student government made any real contribution to the school? How do you get into student government?
- What political, social, or academic issues concerned students last year? How did the administration react? What was the resolution?

Social life and campus activities

- What do students do for fun?
- What is the role of fraternities and sororities on campus? If I didn't want to join, could I have a satisfactory social life?
- What are the dominant social groups on campus? Do the groups get along with one another? Have there been any problems?
- What role do team sports play in the social life of the college? What happens on football or basketball weekends? If I didn't want to join in, would I find kindred spirits?
- Is there a good balance of academics, social life, and extracurricular activities?
- What were the social or cultural highlights last year?
- What is the role of the campus newspaper?
- Is there an alcohol problem and, if so, how is the college handling it? What is the incidence of binge drinking? Do students feel safe on campus?

Campus facilities

Housing and dining

- Is there something I should know about housing that would help me in my choice?
- What are the types of food plans? All you can eat? Vegetarian? Kosher?

Activity centers and athletic and recreational facilities

- What kinds of facilities does the student center have? Is it a magnet for student activities? Are there other hangouts?
- Do you think the college pays attention to its appearance?
- How would you rate the fitness center?

Health, career counseling, special student services, and security

- Is there a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or career counselor on campus? What is the waiting period for appointments?
- Is the office for special services adequate to the demand?
- How good is the security on campus?

Library

- What have been students' experiences with the library: Have there been complaints?
- Is the library well equipped with computers and copy machines?

The community off campus

- What is there to do in town? How would I get there?

Academics and faculty

- What is distinctive about education here? What is the educational philosophy of the college? Has it changed much in recent years?
- Is the honor code working? How widespread is cheating?
- What is the most popular major on campus? Why?
- Do you think that students are generally enthusiastic about their classes? Do people talk about their courses outside of class?
- How would you characterize the academic pressure and workload?
- Are there research possibilities with the faculty? In what areas?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the advising system?
- What is the quality of student and faculty relationships? Is the faculty interested in and accessible to students after class? Do faculty members participate in student activities?
- Are curriculum changes in the works? How will that affect my college years?
- Are any departments being cut back or discontinued? If so, why?
- Are any new programs scheduled for the next four years?

Source: Adapted from Campus Visits and College Interviews by Zola Dincin Schneider (College Board, 2002). This book has many more questions you might ask of college representatives, plus chapters on every aspect of the interview and campus visit.

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APPLYING TO COLLEGE

A college application is a reflection of a student's achievements during high school. Some colleges make admission decisions solely on the basis of objective data such as class rank and an ACT/SAT score. Other schools also look at more subjective data such as letters of recommendation and personal essays. Below is a list of variables that colleges evaluate as they make their admission decisions.

Admission Criteria

- Grade point average
- Score on ACT/SAT
- Strength of schedule
- Letters of recommendation
- Extracurricular activities
- Personal essays
- Interviews

Although colleges differ on the relative importance given to each of the criteria listed above, most schools look at cumulative GPA, class rank, and scores on ACT or SAT as being very important in their selection decisions.

Transcript/Strength of Schedule

The high school transcript is primary in the evaluation of college applicants. The transcript provides a record of a student's semester grades in all courses taken. The transcript also contains a cumulative GPA. College admission committees evaluate the academic strength of a high school by means of a school profile which is included with each application.

The strength of a student's schedule is evaluated in the admissions decision process. Selective colleges want to see if a student selected the most rigorous courses available. Also, consistencies in performance and trends in grades are noted.

Grade Point Average

The transcript records a student's cumulative grade point average (GPA). The GPA is the average of a student's semester grades. Sacred Heart-Griffin calculates GPAs on a 4.0 scale:

A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0. In honors courses A=5.0; in modified courses A=3.0.

GPAs can be reported as weighted to reflect different grade weights corresponding to the different levels of classes, or they can be reported as unweighted where all grades are computed on a 4.0 scale.

Colleges usually consider a student's GPA and curriculum to be the most important criteria for admission.

Class Rank

SHG does not report class rank to colleges/universities or scholarship organizations. However, in an effort to promote our students' ability to attain acceptances to the most selective schools and to receive competitive scholarships, guidance counselors will utilize various ways to communicate our students' academic performance relative to peers. One example of this would be reporting of percentile rank.

Test Scores

The American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are the two college entrance exams that students have an option to take for college admission. Most colleges accept scores from either test. It is impossible to know for sure if a student will perform higher on an ACT or SAT unless a student takes both and compares the scores. Students are encouraged to take the exams during junior year so that they can retake the exam if the scores are not as high as their goal. These tests can be retaken as many times as a student wants. However, it is not typical for scores to rise significantly. Colleges generally only consider the highest scores obtained on any one test. Students can access the Office of Guidance and Counseling to obtain registration packets for the ACT and SAT. Students may also register online: ACT www.act.org or SAT www.collegeboard.com. The ACT is given at Sacred Heart-Griffin in April and June. The test is offered at other sites in Springfield throughout the year. The SAT is not given at SHG but is given at other sites in Springfield.

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

In spring of 2008, three sessions were held with the junior class students to discuss the college application process. As juniors, many students have taken an ACT/SAT preparation class, taken the ACT and/or SAT, and attended college presentations by the representatives. Over breaks, some have visited the colleges and universities they are interested in applying to in the fall.

Many colleges and universities open their campuses to high school students during the summer months for special programs. Some of the courses are "for credit", others for enrichment. Attending a summer course, workshop, or seminar can assist in choosing a college major, add to the resume of students seeking admission to highly selective colleges, and provide the opportunity to develop personal gifts and talents. Check out college websites or the guidance office for more information.

College planning information can be found on the SHG website at www.shg.org. Go to the Student Services link and then to the College Planning tab. We are continually updating the site to include that latest information.

When returning to school after summer break, make an appointment with your counselor or the college counselor early in the senior year. We have many publications and file cabinets containing information on the various accredited colleges/universities in the U.S. We have occupational handbooks and college major information. We have many college catalogs and curriculum guides. Our website also contains lists with helpful internet sites. All of these are valuable tools in making your college decision.

In addition, representatives from many of the area colleges/universities visit SHG during the school day. Seniors are invited to attend any of these presentations. Juniors may attend second semester. We announce these visits in advance and post this information outside of the Guidance Office. We also list college rep visits on our website. To attend a presentation, the student must obtain a pass at least one day in advance and get permission from the teacher of the class being missed. Students may not be allowed to attend if there is an exam, lab, or presentation during that class period.

Decide early in your senior year where you will apply. Some applications are available in the counseling office. Others can be obtained:

- from admissions representatives visiting SHG
- at the Capital Area Education Fair
- by contacting the college/university admissions office
- by requesting one when you visit a campus
- by downloading an application from the college/university web site
- by using the Common Application - standard application some universities use for admission
- by applying online

Complete the application early. Make a copy for your records. Be sure to sign the application. When complete, turn the application in to your counselor, along with the application fee if one is required. If a personal statement or essay is required, please submit with your application. Many schools have a secondary school report or counselor recommendation form that needs to be completed by the counselor. If a counselor recommendation is required, schedule an appointment with your counselor before he/she writes the letter. Be sure to make your request at least three weeks before the deadline. Bring the secondary school or counselor recommendation form in with your application. At that time, you will be required to sign a transcript release form. Your information will be forwarded upon completion.

If applying online, see your counselor to request that a transcript be sent. It is important to check to see if you need to download a secondary school or counselor recommendation form upon submission of the application. If a teacher recommendation is required, give him/her a copy of your resume and any form needed for completion. Give the teacher three weeks to write the recommendation. This is often missed by the student but necessary for an application to be considered complete. It is the student's responsibility to print the secondary school report or counselor recommendation form and bring to his/her counselor when requesting a copy of the transcript.

The transcript includes name and address information as well as a listing of all courses taken while in high school with semester grades through sixth semester (end of junior year). It also contains the unweighted and weighted cumulative grade point averages. SHG no longer ranks its students. The cumulative number of credits as well as number of absences for each period are also recorded. In addition, we provide our grading scale used at SHG. A listing of school activities, honors and awards and athletics are also recorded.

The first three transcripts will be sent for free. There is a \$3.00 fee for each transcript after the third. No transcripts will be sent the second semester if senior bills are not up to date.

PLEASE NOTE: ACT and SAT scores are received at the high school and will be listed on the back. Our software system allows us to print all or none of the scores. If students want their scores blocked, they must let their counselor know when completing the transcript request form. However, many colleges and universities require that the test scores be sent directly from the testing agency. Scores can be sent by going to www.act.org for the ACT results or to www.collegeboard.com for the SAT. There is a charge to have scores sent to colleges after the exam results have been sent to the student. However, when registering for these tests, the student has the option of sending scores to several colleges at no additional charge.

In addition to the transcript, we always enclose a school profile. The school profile gives the college admissions committee a better picture of the school the student is coming from. Some of the information listed includes the size of the school, demographic information on the previous graduating class, required courses for graduation, curriculum offered at SHG, grading scale, median ACT/SAT scores, and listing of colleges/universities where SHG grads have matriculated.

HOW TO DEVELOP A COLLEGE RESUME

A resume can be very useful to you. You should begin to create a resume as soon as you begin applying to colleges. A resume can be helpful when you ask a teacher to write a recommendation for school. It will allow a teacher to see your strengths in other areas. It can also be very useful in an interview situation, as it gives the interviewer a quick overview. A resume can also help to get a summer job, or even after-school employment.

Resumes can be designed in several ways, by skills or by chronological accomplishments. It is best to limit your resume to one page. The following is an example of how to construct a college resume.

Name
Address
Phone and Email

High School name, address

- GPA and ACT, SAT scores (if you wish to share them on your resume)
- Honors: i.e. National Honor Society, National Merit Finalist, etc.

School Experiences

Here you will want to list all your extra curricular activities and number of years involved

- Leadership Positions i.e. Captain of a Varsity Sport, Member of Student Council, Officer on committee or for a club
- Clubs i.e. SEA, Math contest, Prevention, Key Club, etc.
- Yearbook, Newspaper
- Sports, music, arts, what level, how many years

Other educational experiences

Can include outside singing or instrumental lessons, Silver Cross, etc.
Also participation in dance shows or a summer educational program

Employment

List all your jobs starting with the most recent.

Community Service

Here is where you will list the various activities that you have done to earn service hours such as Big Brother Big Sister, Hope School, etc.

Personal Interests

This is the section where you will want to list activities that have not been listed elsewhere. For example, mountain biking, web designing, playing on a travel soccer team, etc.

Proposed College Major

(If known)

COUNSELOR/TEACHER LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Colleges generally indicate if letters of recommendation are required to be submitted in their application process. There is often a specific form included for the teacher and the counselor to complete. Students applying to highly selective schools need at least one letter. Students whose grades may require explanation due to extenuating circumstances may also want to include a letter of recommendation with their applications.

Choose teachers who have had you in an academic subject B English, Math, Social Studies, Science, or Foreign Language B during your junior or senior year. Some applications require letters from specific disciplines. Club moderators or coaches may be asked to write supplemental letters. When requesting a letter of recommendation, include a resume to allow the teacher to know other facets of your academic career at SHG.

Get to know your counselor. The counselor letter is an integral part of your application packet. Make an appointment early in the year to review your college plans and to discuss your resume.

It is important that college admission committees have a complete picture of you. Your resume should include your grade point average. In addition, you should include a list of the activities in which you have participated, leadership positions you have held, community service in which you have been involved, and any honors or awards you have received.

Please give teachers and counselors three weeks to complete recommendations. A copy of your resume should be given to the person you are asking to write for you. An example of a resume format is included on the following page.

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

The ability to pay for college is a common concern among most students and parents. However, there are several resources available to students and parents to help fund your education after high school. These resources include federal aid, state aid, scholarships, loans and work-study programs.

Every student who has applied for admission to a particular school should also apply for financial aid. Some families perceive that they will not be eligible for aid because their family income is too high. This is not always true. Family income is only one criterion on which financial aid is based. The first step in the financial aid process is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in January of your senior year. The FAFSA is available online. Information from your FAFSA is used to conduct a need analysis which determines the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Your financial need is based on the total cost of attendance at a particular college minus your EFC. The EFC remains the same for every college regardless of the actual cost of attendance. Once your financial need is determined, this information is forwarded to the colleges you requested.

Sources of Financial Aid

Federal Pell Grants - These grants help pay for educational costs and require no repayment.

Monetary Award Program (MAP) - These state funded grants help pay for educational costs and require no repayment.

Federal Direct Loans - Loans provided by the federal government to students at a lower interest rate. These loans require repayment with a variety of repayment options available.

- **Perkins Loans** - Federal need based loan available to students. Interest is subsidized (paid by the government) while the student is in school.
- **Stafford Loans** - Federal need based and non-need based loan. Interest is either subsidized or unsubsidized, depending on need.

Scholarships - Requirements for scholarships vary from academic performance, financial need, and merit based. Most scholarships are renewable if criteria for performance are met. SHG receives information on a number of scholarships every year. Details regarding the criteria for these scholarships can be found on the SHG website at www.shg.org.

Federal Work Study - Eligible students work part-time while attending classes at least half-time, generally in career-related jobs.

SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS

How can you tell a legitimate program from a scam? According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), there are six phrases commonly used to lure in unwitting parents and students:

- This scholarship is guaranteed or your money back.
- You can't get this information anywhere else.
- May I have your credit card/bank account number to hold this scholarship for you?
- We'll do all the work.
- The scholarship will cost some money.
- You have been selected by a national foundation to receive a scholarship. For just a small handling fee, we can send you the check.

In general, be wary of scholarships with an application fee, scholarship matching services who guarantee success, advance-fee loan scams, and sales pitches disguised as financial aid seminars.

For complete information about scholarship scams, go to the Federal Trade Commission's web site www.ftc.gov.

For free scholarship searches on the Web, we recommend www.fastweb.com or www.wiredscholar.com. You do not have to wait until senior year to begin your search for scholarships.

THE COLLEGE BOUND ATHLETE

- There are over 19,000 high schools in the United States.
- There are over 5.5 million participants in high school athletics.
- Two percent of high school athletes are contacted by a college coach.
- Five percent of high school athletes actually participate in college athletics.
- Less than 0.5% of high school athletes receive an athletic grant from a college.

If you intend to participate in sports in college, the following information will be helpful to you. The first thing to keep in mind is that scholarships, whether full or partial, are extremely hard to obtain. The second thing to remember is that you need to be proactive in securing a scholarship or even the opportunity to be part of a college team. Start early in your high school career and enlist the aid of your coaches, parents, and guidance counselors.

Beginning your freshman year, you should construct a resume of all of your athletic achievements. This is an important tool that can be used for contacting schools and coaches. Include your cumulative grade point average and any academic honors you have received. The purpose of the resume is to put you in as favorable a light as possible. Include a cover letter with your resume that will tell coaches who you are and why you are interested in their school. Either your coach or your guidance counselor can help you with this. Work with your coach and parents to identify a list of possible colleges and universities. Look at all divisions. Consult your guidance counselor with your list of possibilities to ensure that you are aware of the academic qualifications for each institution. Your counselor will also be able to help you understand the complexities of the eligibility requirements.

There are three associations that govern the majority of intercollegiate athletics: the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). The NCAA governs three different levels of intercollegiate sports: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I schools are the most athletically competitive. Division I and II schools offer athletic scholarships. Division III schools may not offer athletic scholarships; however, your coach or counselor could be very instrumental in helping you apply for grants. Colleges in the NAIA are generally smaller in size, and some are very competitive, but they do offer generous scholarships. The NJCAA oversees competition among two-year colleges.

In order to be eligible to participate in Division I or II athletics, students must register with and be certified as a qualifier by the NCAA Clearinghouse. This agency was set up by the NCAA to ensure that prospective student-athletes meet a minimum academic standard.

Students should register with the Clearinghouse during their junior year. To register, follow the directions on the Clearinghouse website: www.act.org/ncaa. It is also necessary to have official ACT/SAT scores sent directly from the testing agency and an

official transcript sent by the high school. In addition, if your student athlete commits to an athletic program at a Division I or Division II college/university, it is imperative that a final transcript be sent to the NCAA Clearinghouse. Contact the SHG Guidance Department upon graduation as well as following up with the Clearinghouse prior to the beginning of the student's fall semester of college to ensure that they have been cleared for participation.

The minimum requirements for participation in Division I athletics include:

- Graduation from high school
- Successful completion of a core curriculum of at least 16 core courses:
 - 4 years of English
 - 2 years of math (Algebra I and higher)
 - 2 years of social science
 - 2 years of natural/physical science (1 year of laboratory science)
 - 1 additional year in English, math, natural or physical science
 - 4 years of extra core courses (from any category above, or foreign language, non-doctrinal religion or philosophy)
- Earn a minimum required grade-point average in your core courses; and
- Earn a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches your core-course grade-point average and test score sliding scale which can be located on the website at www.ncaaclearinghouse.com.

The following is a list of web sites which may be useful to you:

- NCAA www.ncaa.org
- NCAA Clearinghouse www.ncaaclearinghouse.net
- NAIA www.naia.org

HELPFUL INTERNET SITES

College Testing:

ACT www.act.org
SAT www.collegeboard.com

SHG Homepage:

www.shg.org

Test Preparation:

www.review.com
www.kaplan.com
www.petersons.com
www.learnatest.com/LearningExpressLibrary

Athletics:

www.ncaa.org
www.naia.org
www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

Financial Aid:

FAFSA online
US Department of Education
The Student Guide to Financial Aid
Illinois Student Assistance Commission
The Financial Aid Information Page
Educational Funding
Black Excel: The College Help Network
Hispanic Scholarship Fund

www.fafsa.ed.gov
www.students.gov or www.ed.gov
www.studentaid.ed.gov
www.collegezone.com
www.finaid.org
www.salliemae.com
www.blackExcel.org
www.hsf.net

Scholarships:

www.fastweb.com
www.srnexpress.com
www.scholarships.com
www.petersons.com/finaid
www.wiredscholar.com

Applying to/Selecting Colleges:

www.collegeexpress.com
www.gocollege.com
www.mycollegeguide.org

Info on Various Aspects of College:

www.collegeparents.org
www.collegeispossible.org
www.privatecolleges.com
www.supercollege.com
www.campustours.com
www.ecampustours.com

College Major/Career Info:

www.careerkey.org
www.wisemantech.com/guidance/careerspecific.htm
www.prenhall.com/success/MajorExp/index.html
www.bls.gov/oco
www.jobweb.org
www.employmentguide.com

GLOSSARY

Accreditation - Recognition of a college or university by any of the regional or national accrediting bodies.

ACT - The American College Test is a standardized test that examines English, Reading, Math and Science Reasoning. The scores are reported by subject areas and combined into a composite score. Almost all colleges require a standardized test either the Act or SAT.

Aid Package - A combination of aid determined by a college financial aid office. It can include a scholarship, grant, loan, or work.

AP - These are advanced placement courses that cover the subject area at a more accelerated pace. The courses also deal with more in-depth subject matter. Students take the AP exam in each subject in May. Many colleges and universities will award college credit with a score of 4 or 5 (occasionally a 3).

Award Letter - A letter telling you what financial aid (if any) your college is offering to you (includes types and amounts of aid offered, specific program information, etc.). You may choose to accept some or all of what is offered.

Candidate's Reply Date - The policy that permits students to wait until May 1 to select the school they will attend.

CEEB Code - The code that is given to each high school in the nation. The code for SHG is **143965. YOU WILL NEED TO KNOW THIS NUMBER.**

Common Application - An application that is accepted by many colleges and universities. It asks very general questions and also has a general essay question. Once the application is filled out, it can be duplicated and sent to any of the colleges that use the common application.

Deferred - An Early Decision/Early Action admissions decision, meaning the school would like to wait and look at your application in the regular decision pool.

Deferred Admission - Delaying attendance at the college or university where the student is admitted for one year.

Early Action - A program that admits students to a college early without a binding contract, different than early decision, described below. The decision is made usually before Christmas. The candidate is not committed to enroll.

Early Decision - Used by elite colleges and universities. This is a legal and binding contract between the student and the college that, if accepted, the student must attend that college. The only exception is if the college is not able to meet the financial obligation. Also, the student must withdraw all applications to other colleges. This should only be used if the student is absolutely sure about the college.

Expected Family Contribution - Amount students and their family are expected to contribute toward cost of attendance.

FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This is explained in the financial aid section of this booklet in greater detail.

Geographic Desirability - The term that is often used by admission counselors to increase the representation of students from all areas of the United States.

Grade Point Average - A student's overall scholastic performance. The GPA is computed by multiplying the number of grade points earned in each course times the number of course hours/credit hours, then dividing the sum by the total number of course hours/credit hours.

Honors Program - A program for gifted students to earn credit by taking courses offered by a special division within the college or university. Usually extra counseling, small classes, and special library privileges are part of the program.

Need-Blind - Admission offices that do not use a student's financial profile when making an admission decision.

On-Line Applications - Many colleges and universities prefer students apply online. In fact, many schools now waive the admission fee if one does apply online. Be certain to check at the college or university as to which method the admission office prefers.

Pell Grants - The largest and most common college federal program. It also is explained in-depth in the financial aid section.

Reach School - A college or university for which the student has borderline credentials for admission. However, applying is certainly worth a chance as the admission committee often changes its criteria for acceptance.

Retention Rate - The percentage of freshmen who return after freshman year. A high rate indicates contentment on the part of first year students.

Rolling Admission - The admission policy that reviews completed applications as they are received. The decision is sent shortly after applications are received. This type of admission decision is usually employed by larger universities. More selective schools often do not notify students until April 1st with a response date of May 1st.

SAR (Student Aid Report) - The information you will receive approximately 3-6 weeks after your FAFSA has been processed. It will report the information from your application and, if there are no questions or problems with your application, your SAR will report your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

SAT I - Another standardized test, the Scholastic Aptitude Test. It is a standardized test that examines a student's verbal and quantitative preparation and reasoning skills. This test is used by more selective colleges and universities.

SAT II - These are the subject tests given by the College Board that were previously referred to as achievement tests. The more selective schools require students to take at least three tests, usually one in math, one in English, and one of your choosing. It is recommended that you take each test as you finish a course, while the material is fresh in your mind.

Safety School - A school or university to which your counselor has advised you that you are almost certainly guaranteed admission.

Stafford Loans - Government loans for students who are attending college part time.

Transcript - The official record of high school or college courses and grades, generally required as part of the college application.

Virtual Tours - The opportunity for the student and family to experience a college tour in the comfort of your home.

Waiting List - Wait Listed - Used for private schools or more selective universities. It indicates that if room becomes available, the school is willing to admit you. However, there is no guarantee that the school will use its wait list, so it is important to make plans to attend another school. Sometimes students do not clear the wait list until the last moment. This will cause you to lose your deposit at another school and possibly more funds which are not refundable.

Work Study - This is often part of the financial package whereby a student must work at some campus job. The job can be in the admission office, food service, etc.