



COLLEGE HANDBOOK.



**EAGLE'S LANDING
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**



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Dear Students.

Welcome to one of the most exciting chapters of your life!

High school is a time of growth, discovery, and possibility. You will challenge yourself in the classroom, find your passions outside of it, and begin to imagine what your future might look like. It can also feel overwhelming at times — and that is completely normal. That is exactly why this resource exists.

The College Handbook is designed to be your guide throughout your high school journey. Inside, you will find checklists, timelines, and information to help you stay organized and intentional at every stage — from the first days of ninth grade all the way through the decisions of senior year. Think of it as a roadmap: something to return to again and again as you grow, set new goals, and navigate the path ahead.

This handbook is a guide, not a rulebook. Every student's journey is unique, and there is no single right way to prepare for your future. What matters most is that you are moving forward with purpose and with the people around you in your corner.

And we are very much in your corner. The Academic Office is here to walk alongside you every step of the way — answering your questions, celebrating your wins, and helping you work through the challenges. We are genuinely excited about your goals and your future plans, and we look forward to partnering with you to help make them a reality.

So dig in, dream big, and know that you do not have to figure any of this out alone.

With excitement for what is ahead,
The Academic Office

Dear Families.

Parenting a high schooler is one of the most rewarding and at times, most humbling experiences there is. You want to guide without overstepping, encourage without pressuring, and help without doing it for them. It is a delicate balance, and we want you to know that you do not have to navigate it alone.

The College Handbook was designed with your student in mind, but we hope it becomes a valuable tool for your entire family. We encourage you to read through it, share it with your student, and use it as a starting point for conversations about their goals, interests, and plans for the future. Asking your student where they are on the checklist, what colleges they are curious about, or what kind of career they are imagining can open doors to some of the most meaningful conversations you will have during these four years.

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to let your student take ownership of this process. Your role is to be the encourager, the sounding board, and the steady presence — while allowing them to discover who they are and where they want to go. The earlier they learn to advocate for themselves, meet deadlines, and make decisions, the better prepared they will be for life beyond high school.

The Academic Office is here to support your entire family. We welcome your questions, value your partnership, and are committed to keeping the lines of communication open throughout your student's high school journey. If you ever have concerns, need guidance, or simply want to check in, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for entrusting us with your student. It is a responsibility we take to heart.

With gratitude,
The Academic Office



What colleges look for

The college admissions process is often described as holistic, meaning that colleges review the whole student rather than focusing on a single factor. Admissions officers consider a combination of academic achievement, personal character, and life experiences when evaluating applicants. However, it is important to understand that not all areas carry equal weight — academics remain the foundation of every application.

Grades and Course Selection

Academic performance is the single most important factor in the college admissions process. Colleges want to see that students have challenged themselves and succeeded. A strong GPA is important, but equally significant is the rigor of the courses taken. Students who pursue Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment, or Honors courses signal to admissions officers that they are prepared for the demands of college-level work. A high GPA in less challenging courses is often viewed less favorably than a slightly lower GPA earned in a rigorous curriculum. Simply put, colleges want to see that students are pushing themselves academically throughout their high school career.

Extracurricular Activities

Colleges are not only looking for strong students — they are looking for engaged, contributing members of a community. Extracurricular involvement during the school year and summer months plays a meaningful role in the admissions process. Whether through athletics, clubs, community service, fine arts, student government, or part-time employment, consistent and meaningful involvement speaks to a student's character and how they might contribute to a college campus. Quality matters more than quantity — deep commitment to a few activities is far more impressive than a long list of surface-level involvement. Summer experiences, such as academic programs, internships, volunteer work, or employment, also demonstrate initiative and a willingness to grow outside of the classroom. It is also worth noting that colleges recognize and respect students who carry responsibilities at home, including caring for siblings, elderly relatives, or other family members. These responsibilities reflect maturity, dependability, and a strong sense of character — qualities that colleges value just as much as traditional extracurricular involvement.

Test Scores

For many colleges — particularly highly selective institutions — standardized test scores remain a significant part of the application. The SAT and ACT provide admissions offices with a common data point to compare students across different schools and grading systems. While a growing number of schools have adopted test-optional policies, students applying to competitive universities are strongly encouraged to sit for these exams and submit scores, as strong performance can meaningfully strengthen an application. Preparation and multiple attempts, when possible, are encouraged to help students present their best scores.

Additional Factors

Beyond academics and activities, colleges also consider letters of recommendation, personal essays, demonstrated interest, and in some cases, interviews. These elements give students the opportunity to show who they are beyond the numbers. A compelling essay or a glowing recommendation from a teacher who knows a student well can leave a lasting impression on an admissions officer.

While every piece of an application matters, students should always remember that grades, course rigor, extracurricular commitment, and test scores form the core of a competitive application. Building a strong foundation in these areas early in high school gives students the best possible position when the time comes to apply.

Freshman Year Checklist



Ninth grade is the ideal time to build meaningful relationships and establish a strong foundation for a successful high school career.

Start Strong

- Discuss and define your high school expectations, interests, and goals.
- Set a positive tone for your high school career by developing good habits such as keeping a weekly planner, scheduling dedicated homework time, and actively participating in class.
- Understand that colleges will review the courses you take in 9th grade, the grades you earn, your semester GPA, and your cumulative GPA.
- Begin building relationships with your teachers, school counselor, and administrators.

Coursework

- Choose coursework that is appropriately challenging for your abilities.
- Meet with your academic counselor and teachers to learn about advanced course offerings and create a rough four-year academic plan.
- Track your grades regularly, know where you stand in each class, and identify areas where you need to improve to reach your goals.
- Give your best effort on the PreACT and PSAT.

Extracurricular Activities

- Continue extracurricular activities from middle school that you want to develop further.
- Explore new activities you are interested in or excited to try in high school.
- Look for community service opportunities both within and outside of school.
- Seek out leadership roles in the organizations, clubs, or sports you participate in.

Prepare for College

- Keep a running record of activities, honors, awards, and volunteer work you participate in or earn throughout the school year.
- Research careers that interest you.
- Consider taking on a part-time job or internship.
- Begin exploring colleges through their websites and social media platforms.

Sophomore Year Checklist



Tenth grade is the time to build on the foundation you established as a freshman, deepening your academic commitments, exploring your interests, and taking your first serious steps toward college planning.

Coursework

- Choose rigorous courses that are appropriately challenging for your abilities.
- Review your four-year coursework plan to make sure you are on track.
- Research college admission requirements to ensure your course of study aligns with the expectations of colleges you are considering.
- Track your grades regularly, know where you stand in each class, and identify areas where you need to improve to reach your goals.

Standardized Testing

- Give your best effort on the PreACT and PSAT to get an accurate picture of which standardized test is the best fit for you.
- Review your PreACT and PSAT scores to gain valuable feedback on your strengths and areas for growth.
- Develop a study plan for standardized testing to work on over the summer before Junior Year.
- Sign up for ACT/SAT prep courses offered at ELCA or through other test prep organizations if needed.

Extracurricular Activities

- Continue participating in meaningful extracurricular activities at school, in your community, or at home.
- Consider which of your activities offer opportunities for leadership and pursue those roles.
- Remember that the quality of your involvement matters more than the number of activities you participate in.
- Consider taking on a part-time job or internship.

Prepare for College

- Update your running record of activities, honors, awards, and volunteer work from this school year.
- Research the differences between four-year colleges, two-year colleges, and trade or technical schools, including their entrance requirements.
- Visit local college campuses and explore virtual tours for schools further away.
- Take ownership of your summer — whether through a job, internship, camp, or a program on a college campus, use the time intentionally and productively.

Junior Year Checklist



Junior year is one of the most important and demanding years of high school. This is the time to sharpen your academic focus, take your standardized testing seriously, and begin building your college list in earnest.

Coursework

- Choose rigorous courses that are appropriately challenging for your abilities.
- Review your four-year coursework plan to make sure you are on track.
- Research college admission requirements to ensure your course of study aligns with the expectations of colleges you are considering.
- Track your grades regularly, know where you stand in each class, and identify areas where you need to improve to reach your goals.
- Develop strong relationships with your core subject teachers — you will need letters of recommendation from them for college and scholarship applications.

Standardized Testing

- Give your best effort on the PreACT and PSAT to get an accurate picture of which standardized test is the best fit for you.
- Review your PreACT and PSAT scores to gain feedback on your strengths and areas for growth.
- Continue building your test-taking and academic skills to improve your PreACT and PSAT scores.
- Sign up for ACT/SAT prep courses offered at ELCA or through other test prep organizations if needed.
- Register for the SAT and/or ACT in the spring based on your "Best Test" letter. If you were advised that either test suits your strengths, sign up for both. Your spring results will help you decide which test to focus on during the summer and fall of Senior Year.
- If you require testing accommodations, contact Student Support Services in the fall of Junior Year.

Extracurricular Activities

- Continue participating in meaningful extracurricular activities and actively seek out leadership roles and opportunities.
- Consider job shadowing in careers or fields related to majors you are interested in pursuing.
- Explore academic competitions, research opportunities, or enrichment programs related to your areas of interest — these experiences demonstrate intellectual curiosity and can strengthen your college application.

Prepare for College

- Update your running record with any new leadership roles, achievements, or contributions from this school year to strengthen your college applications and resume.
- Attend college fairs to discover new schools and connect with admissions representatives.
- Stay on top of emails and mailings from colleges, as this communication often contains important information about admissions and deadlines.
- Begin building your college list and make plans to visit as many campuses as possible, in person or virtually.
- If you're considering military academies or ROTC scholarships, begin application process in January.
- If you plan to compete in athletics at a Division I or Division II college, register with the NCAA.
- If you are a musician, actor, or visual artist, reach out to colleges early to obtain audition and portfolio requirements and deadlines.

Summer before Senior Year



The summer before Senior Year is the perfect opportunity to prepare for the college application process. How you use this time will set you up for success when fall arrives.

College Research

- Keep an open mind as you explore a wide range of reach, target, and likely college options.
- Visit college campuses! Explore local schools in person, attend fly-in programs, or take virtual tours of schools farther away.
- Sign up for college mailing lists and follow schools on social media to stay informed and signal your interest.
- Attend online information sessions and webinars hosted by colleges, universities, and other organizations.
- Review the standardized testing requirements for the colleges you are considering to determine how to best prepare for the SAT and/or ACT.
- Compare the GPA and course requirements of colleges on your list against your own transcript to assess your competitiveness.

Standardized Testing

- Register for upcoming test dates and request fee waivers from your school counselor if applicable.
- Map out your test preparation and testing dates on a calendar so you can pace yourself and prepare effectively.
- Use online resources and/or test prep courses to study for your exams.

College Applications

- Begin planning how you will prepare your application materials, including essays, letters of recommendation, and financial aid documents.
- Create a calendar of important deadlines, including standardized test submission dates, application deadlines, scholarship deadlines, and financial aid due dates.
- Verify that your Social Security number is correct on your transcript — this is essential for receiving your Georgia Match letter in October.

Senior Year Timeline



Senior year is finally here! Stay focused and finish strong — the decisions you make this year will shape the next exciting chapter of your life.

August

- Sign up for the Class Remind and Class Google Classroom.
- Begin narrowing down the list of colleges you plan to apply to.
- Register for fall SAT and/or ACT test dates at collegeboard.org or actstudent.org.
- Make sure your resume and activities list is up to date, including all junior year and summer activities.
- Complete brag sheets for your teachers and counselor and formally request letters of recommendation. Be sure to thank anyone writing on your behalf, and remind your parents to complete the Family Brag Sheet for your counselor.
- Schedule time with your college counselor to review your first drafts of college essays.
- Begin working on your college applications.
- Update your SCOIR account.
- Register with Common App and link your application to your SCOIR account.
- Register for College IF.
- Check your email regularly for college representative visits at school and for general communications from colleges.
- Attend Senior Transition Night.
- If you are not applying through Common App, request that your transcript be sent directly to your colleges.

September

- Confirm that your resume and activities list is up to date, including all junior year and summer activities.
- If you have not already done so, complete brag sheets for your teachers and counselor, request letters of recommendation, and thank those writing on your behalf.
- Schedule time with your college counselor to review your college essays and Common App activities list.
- Continue working on your college applications.
- Check your email regularly for college representative visits at school and for communications from colleges.
- If you are not applying through Common App, request that your transcript be sent directly to your colleges.
- Send your standardized test scores to all colleges and universities that require them.

October – November

- Make final edits to your college essays.
- Complete your Common App Activities List.
- Meet with your college counselor before submitting any applications.
- Note that Early Action deadlines for Georgia Tech, Georgia College and State University, and UGA are October 15th. Check individual college websites for all other Early Action and Early Decision deadlines.
- FAFSA becomes available October 1st — complete it as early as possible.
- Attend the College Financial Aid Informational session.
- If you are not applying through Common App, request that your transcript be sent directly to your colleges.
- Send your standardized test scores to all colleges and universities that require them.
- Research and calendar institutional scholarship and merit aid deadlines.

December – February

- Regular Decision deadlines fall between January 1st and January 10th — plan accordingly.
- All recommendation requests must be submitted by December 1st to give your teachers and counselor adequate time to write before winter break.
- Continue researching and applying for scholarship opportunities.
- Males who are 18 years of age or older must register with Selective Service in order to be eligible for state financial aid.
- Record all financial aid deadlines for institutions where you have applied or been admitted.

March – April

- Continue maintaining strong academic performance. Colleges review your coursework throughout your entire senior year and reserve the right to rescind offers of admission. Additionally, your HOPE/Zell Miller GPA is cumulative, and your final semester grades will be used to determine eligibility.
- Acceptance letters and financial aid award letters will begin arriving — review each carefully and compare your options.
- Research housing options and submit your housing deposit by the required deadline.
- Continue searching and applying for scholarships.

May

- Final enrollment decisions are due by May 1st.
 - Submit your housing deposit by the required deadline.
 - Notify your college counselor of your final decision so your final transcript can be sent to your chosen college upon graduation.
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SCOIR



[SCOIR app.scoir.com/signin](https://app.scoir.com/signin)

SCOIR is a web-based service designed especially for students and parents. The program tracks and analyzes data about college and career plans to provide up-to-date information specific to Eagle's Landing Christian Academy.

The SCOIR search function helps identify schools students might be interested in based on a number of search parameters including location, academic interests, hobbies, etc. The program's career search and assessment tools may help broaden knowledge of various careers and educational opportunities available. Students are encouraged to utilize résumé building features, which will allow them to keep track of their work, community service, extracurricular activities, and honors and awards.

SCOIR also curates social media and testimonials of students on campus to provide a glimpse into student life. Students are able to curate their own "board", filled with colleges and hashtags they are interested in following.

The SCOIR mobile app enables students to search and manage their profile through their phone.

SCOIR provides an interface for parents so that they may become a part of the search process. Financial calculators are available to help assess and compare the costs of colleges, and parents can even recommend schools that they think their student may be interested in.

SCOIR is a great resource to use when searching for colleges. The site can be used to help search for specific criteria you are looking for in a college.

The platform also allows counselors and teachers to send recommendations, transcripts and additional documents efficiently. Students will meet with the Guidance and Academic Counselor in the 9th grade to learn more about SCOIR and gain access to their accounts. In the spring of 11th grade, students will meet with the College Placement Counselor for career assessments and linking their Common Application to their SCOIR account.

The Application



College admission criteria may vary from one school to another. However, college admissions will tend to focus on the factors below:

- Rigor/high school curriculum
- GPA
- Standardized test scores
- Essay/supplements
- Activity résumé
- Recommendations

Applications

The first step in applying to a college is completing an application. Students may complete an online application which can be accessed on the school's website. Applications take time to complete. They are a reflection of the student, and therefore should not be rushed through. Many schools require more than one essay or personal statement. Students should think about what they would like the college to know about them that is not already seen in the basic questions asked.

Students are encouraged to meet with the College Counselor to go over their applications prior to submission.

The Common Application

The Common Application is accepted by over 900 colleges and universities. This application allows students to apply to schools using one single application and can be completed by creating an account at www.commonapp.org. Each school will require students to complete their own individual supplement on the Common Application site. Please keep in mind that these supplements typically consist of essay questions. Like your individual personal statement/essay, much thought should be given to these supplemental essays or questions.

Please note that the Common Application will not be sent to the colleges you have added to your "My Colleges" section of the application until you have completed the signature page and click SUBMIT.

The Application



Official High School Transcript

Each college you are applying to must receive an official high school transcript. The College Counseling Center will automatically send transcripts to the colleges on the “Applying” to list in SCOIR for each student, as the application deadline approaches. All transcripts will include ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade’s first and second semester grades. ELCA reports both weighted and nonweighted GPAs, and numeric average grades per semester. Senior courses will appear on the transcript, and first semester senior grades will appear after the first semester grades have been reported.

Colleges are also looking at high school transcripts to see how much students have challenged themselves. The rigor of the courses you have selected while in high school are given much consideration by admissions counselors. Colleges want to see that students have taken advantage of the challenging courses high schools offer, including honors, Dual Enrollment and Advanced Placement. They want to see that students are aware of their strengths and know their potential. For this reason, it is not enough that a student enrolls in an advanced course; how the student performs is just as important. It is best to enroll in an honors or Advanced Placement course that is in a subject you enjoy and are passionate about. Ultimately, you should take courses that are challenging for you specifically. This could mean taking an honors course one year and gradually adding honors courses and APs in subsequent years. Your teachers will guide you through this process.

Standardized Test Scores

Colleges consider standardized tests as a means to see how students compare to other college-bound seniors in the country. Most colleges that use test scores for admission purposes realize that different students and groups of students have different testing profiles and will take those into account.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test, more commonly known as the SAT, and the American College Testing’s assessment, the ACT, are used by colleges and universities for admission. These exams are not the only criteria considered for college admission; however, your score provides colleges with a means of comparing applicants, as it is the only standard component in the application process. How an SAT or ACT score is used varies from school to school, and it is the student’s responsibility to know what standardized tests are required for each school they are applying to. It is imperative that students take test preparation seriously. Studying will help better prepare students for the test and help increase scores.

The Application



Standardized tests are used to assist educators and students in assessing aptitude, ability, and proficiency. ELCA administers the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) to all freshmen and juniors in October. Freshmen and sophomores take the test for practice and exposure to the types of questions asked on the SAT, while juniors will have a chance to qualify for a Merit Scholarship and test their skills against other students nationwide. National Merit Scholarships are determined each year by an index totaling the verbal, math, and writing numbers of the test. Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are also administered the Pre-ACT, a test designed to expose underclassmen to the format of the ACT exam.

In the spring of your junior year, students will be presented with the best test letter. The information in this letter comes from your scores on these pre-exams. This gives you insight into which test to focus on for college admissions. It is highly recommended to take the test you were recommended for in the spring semester of your junior year. If you were recommended for both tests, it is advised you take both tests to see which one you are most comfortable with. You may select the test you want to focus on after receiving scores from this test.

Many colleges will accept scores from either test; however, some colleges require or prefer scores from one or the other. Students should research which test a college requires or prefers. Students may retake these tests as many times as they want; colleges generally use the highest score from multiple tests (known as super scoring).

Please note ELCA does NOT report standardized test scores to colleges. Students must request their test scores be sent to each of the colleges to which they are submitting an application. To do so, please log into your College Board or ACT account via www.CollegeBoard.org or www.ACT.org.

The Application



Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations exist so that students with documented disabilities can show what they actually know rather than what they are able to complete in the standardized testing time guidelines. If you have a documented condition that affects timed testing, these accommodations exist for you. Start early, build documentation that explicitly ties your diagnosis to test conditions, lean on your school records, and appeal a denial rather than accepting it.

Who Qualifies

Both the College Board (SAT) and ACT consider accommodation requests for students with documented disabilities that affect test-taking. The usual categories include:

- Learning disabilities. Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, auditory or visual processing disorders.
- Attention and executive function. ADHD in all subtypes, executive function disorder, processing speed deficits.
- Physical and medical. Visual or hearing impairments, chronic health conditions, physical disabilities.
- Psychological and other. Severe documented anxiety disorders, autism spectrum disorder, traumatic brain injury.

Accommodations Granted

Common accommodations include extended time (usually 50 percent, occasionally 100 percent), extended breaks, a separate or small-group room, a reader, a scribe, and large print.

Fifty percent extended time is the most commonly approved. One hundred percent is harder and requires stronger documentation of a more significant functional limitation. Ask for what your documentation supports, not the maximum available.

Documentation Needed

- A qualifying diagnosis. From a licensed professional (psychologist, psychiatrist, physician, specialist).
- A history. Evidence the condition has affected you over time, not just this year. School records, prior evaluations, IEP or 504 history.
- A functional link to testing. Documentation has to specifically connect the condition to test-taking under timed conditions. A diagnosis on its own is not enough.
- A current evaluation. Generally within the last three to five years for learning disabilities. ADHD timelines can be different. Old evaluations are a common reason for denial.

If you already have an IEP or 504 plan (MAP for ELCA) and use accommodations at school, submit that history. It is the single strongest piece of evidence you can include.

Process for the SAT and AP Tests

- Work with your school. The SSD (Services for Students with Disabilities) coordinator at your school submits the request through College Board's SSD Online system. You cannot submit directly.
- Upload documentation. The coordinator attaches your evaluation, IEP or 504 paperwork, and any relevant records.
- Wait for review. The turnaround is roughly seven weeks. Submit well before your intended test date.
- Appeal if denied. Many denials are reversed with stronger or more specific documentation. Do not treat the first answer as final.

Process for the ACT

- Create an ACT account. Access the Test Accessibility and Accommodations (TAA) system at act.org.
- Submit the request. Students can submit directly (unlike SAT). Upload the supporting documentation.
- School consent. Your school has to confirm. They receive a notification and approve through the system.
- Review period. ACT typically responds within two to three weeks. Plan to submit six or more weeks before your test date.

Common Reasons for Denial

- Starting too late. Seven weeks for SAT, two to three for ACT, plus time to gather documentation. Start at least two to three months out.
- Thin documentation. Diagnosis only, with no explanation of how the condition affects timed testing.
- No school history. If you have never used accommodations in school, get that in place first. It is the clearest evidence the accommodation is needed.
- Older evaluations. More than five years old will usually bounce. Update before applying.

Personal Essay and Supplemental Essays

With each essay or short answer question you submit, you are giving the school more information about yourself; allowing them to see what makes you a unique candidate for admission. Take the time to think of what you would like the admissions counselors to know about you. Each essay you write should be proofed for errors and should be read by an English teacher or the College Counselor. The essay is an important part of the application. If you are writing about a question asked, please be sure that you have answered the question. If you have selected to write a personal statement, think about how someone who does not know you personally will judge what you have written. The writing section of an application gives you, the student, the opportunity to share information that the admissions counselors do not know from the basic information you have provided them.

Supplemental Application Materials

Depending on your intended major, you may be required to submit an additional portfolio or perform an audition. It is the student's responsibility to know what supplemental material or documentation is required by each of the schools to which he/she is applying.

Activities List and Resume

The Activities List is an important part of the college application because it allows colleges to see who a student is beyond grades and test scores. It provides a snapshot of a student's interests, involvement, leadership, service, talents, work experience, and personal commitments throughout high school.

Students should begin building their Activities List early and update it each summer and fall. Keeping an ongoing record of clubs, athletics, fine arts, community service, church involvement, employment, internships, leadership roles, summer programs, awards, and other meaningful experiences will make the college application process much easier. Remember, colleges are not simply looking for a long list of activities. They want to understand how students have spent their time, what has been important to them, and how they have contributed to their school and community. Meaningful involvement, commitment, growth, and leadership can help tell a student's story in ways that a transcript alone cannot.

During the fall semester of senior year, students can schedule a meeting with the College Placement Counselor to review and finalize their Activities List. Taking the time to develop this throughout high school will help ensure that this important part of the college application accurately reflects each student's experiences, accomplishments, and growth.

Some things to consider when working on the Activities List:

1. Be specific. Indicate how many years you have participated in each activity. Also, put yourself in the reader's place. Will that person know that Accolade is the yearbook? Clarify if there is any doubt.
2. Include activities that you intend to participate in during twelfth grade. If you have participated in an activity for a few years, and you know that you will participate as a senior, include that in your activities resume.
3. Use a standard font. While you certainly want your resume to stand out, do not use your font to show creativity. If a college scans an application into their computer system, which many do, more elaborate fonts do not always scan well.
4. Don't limit yourself to Eagle's Landing Christian Academy activities. It is highly recommended that you include activities outside of Eagle's Landing. This may include volunteer work as well as part-time jobs.
5. Nothing is too small to include on your resume. This is your opportunity to sell yourself. Include anything that demonstrates the kind of person you are. It may feel a bit awkward to brag, but that is the purpose of the resume.
6. If your resume seems too short, think about your hobbies and interests. This can include activities that you enjoy doing in your spare time. It gives the colleges a better picture of the type of person you are and fills up space.

The Activities List section in the common app only allows for 10 items. However, you can add a resume to the additional information section of your Common Application. It is also good to have the resume for scholarship application to give review committees insight.

Recommendation Letters

Each student must ask two teachers to write a letter of recommendation. Students are required to ask their teachers in person to write these letters. Once they have done so, each senior must submit an electronic Teacher Recommendation Request Form through their SCOIR account.

ELCA recommends students ask two teachers from two different academic subject areas. Teachers should be from core academic areas, preferably from your junior year of high school. One letter will need to come from a higher-level math/science teacher and the other letter will need to come from a humanities teacher. These teachers will be writing about your academic performance, effort, participation, and overall attitude in the classroom setting. The teacher recommendation letter is an important part of your application. It allows the school to get a glimpse of how you conduct yourself in the classroom setting.

Colleges recommend that students and parents do not have access to recommendation letters. All recommendations will remain confidential and should only be read by those whom the letters are written to. ELCA will not share letters of recommendation with students or parents. If the teacher writing the letter on your behalf wishes to give you a copy of their letter, this is their personal decision and is NOT required. Each college a senior applies to will receive a letter from the College Counselor. This letter will mark the student's accomplishments, personality, and overall impact he/she has had on the ELCA community. The College Counselor may also explain any circumstances that may have impacted a student's academic performance. The college counselor will NOT share letters of recommendation with students or parents. However, if the student needs a letter of recommendation for scholarship purposes, the college counselor will write an additional letter for this purpose for you to use in your scholarship application and searches.

Interviews

Interviews are recommended but not required by most colleges. An interview is a great way for an admissions counselor to get to know you better and allow you to share with them why you would be a great addition to their colleges' campus. Colleges and universities are also utilizing modern day technology by scheduling Zoom interviews with students who are unable to visit their campus; they also reach out to their alumni to schedule interviews in their hometowns. It is recommended that students schedule interviews when asked to do so by the college.

Students who schedule an interview with a school should remember to:

- Dress appropriately
- Be on time
- Use appropriate speech
- Make a list of a few questions to ask the admissions counselor or alumni about the school
- Ask for your interviewer's contact information to send them a thank you note or email after the interview

It is important to note that the interviewer may never mention your grades or standardized test scores. It is not that they will not be considered for admission, but during the interview, the conversation will most likely be about your interests, what you feel makes you a good candidate for admission, and what you can offer the college as a student.

Common Types of Admission & Applications Deadlines

Rolling – Applicants will receive an admission decision as soon as it becomes available. The earlier the student applies, the sooner a decision will be made.

Regular Decision – Deadline typically falls on or after January 1. Decisions are usually reached by March – April.

Early Action – Admission decision is not binding. Students may apply Early Action to as many schools as they would like. Students who apply to a school as an Early Action applicant will learn of their admission decision sooner than under a Regular Decision deadline.

Restrictive Early Action – Admission decision is not binding. Colleges with Restrictive Early Action deadlines may have different stipulations on additional colleges students may apply to under an Early Action application period.

Early Decision – This deadline gives a **BINDING** decision. If a student applies and gets admitted, the student **MUST** attend the school. Students are only permitted to apply to **ONE** school as an Early Decision applicant. They may apply to other schools as an Early Action applicant but must withdraw their applications to those schools if they are admitted into the school they have applied to Early Decision. This deadline typically falls in November and students are usually notified in January. An Early Decision Agreement must be submitted along with the application. This agreement requires a student, parent, and counselor signature. Students should only apply to a college/university as an Early Decision applicant if financial aid/scholarship is not a concern **AND** if it is their number one choice of school.

Early Decision II – This deadline typically falls in November – January. Like Early Decision, this deadline gives a **BINDING** decision. It is a good option for a student who would like to apply to a school Early Decision but would like to take a November or December standardized test.



College Bound Athlete

The College Bound Athlete and NCAA Eligibility

Being part of a sanctioned athletic program in college will have a tremendous impact on your college experience, so it is imperative that students think carefully about whether or not it is something they want to pursue. For some students, the time and dedication they have invested into their primary sport(s), coupled with a high level of talent, make playing in college a natural step. For others, this decision is less clear. It is important to be honest with yourself about your athletic ability, potential, and commitment to the sport all throughout the process of making a decision.

Many students hoping to earn an athletic scholarship mistakenly believe that their junior year does not need to consist of the same activities as other students. They decide not to visit colleges because they want to wait and see who will offer them scholarships. While this might end up working out for some students, it is not what we advise.

If you are an athlete, please keep in mind that recruiting calendars and admissions calendars do not always align. Some students do not get recruited until the second half of their senior year, after their classmates have finished submitting applications and college admission offices have begun closing their incoming classes. These students find themselves nervously waiting, hoping that someone will make them a scholarship offer while watching their friends receive admission offers and make housing deposits at their college choices. Keep in mind the difficulty of scheduling campus visits while playing a sport. Practice and game schedules keep you very busy and leave little time for a day trip (or longer) to see a college campus.

It is advisable to apply to at least one or two colleges as a back-up plan in case an athletic scholarship does not materialize. The college should be one that you feel is a good match academically and financially, regardless of whether you play a sport.

College Bound Athlete

NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association)

Division I

Division I is the highest level of collegiate athletics and includes the largest universities in the country. These schools typically have the biggest athletic budgets, the most facilities, and the greatest media exposure. It is further divided into subdivisions for football — the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS). Schools in this division are often household names, competing in major conferences such as the SEC, Big Ten, ACC, and Pac-12. Athletic scholarships are highly competitive and may cover tuition, room and board, and other expenses. For student-athletes being recruited at this level, it is important to understand NCAA eligibility requirements, including maintaining a qualifying GPA and standardized test scores, completing the NCAA Eligibility Center registration, and adhering to recruiting rules regarding official visits and contact with coaches.

Division II

Division II strikes a balance between competitive athletics and academic focus. Schools at this level are generally mid-sized colleges and universities that offer athletic scholarships, though they tend to be fewer and smaller than those at the Division I level. Student-athletes in Division II are encouraged to be well-rounded, with an emphasis on regional rivalries and a strong connection between campus life and athletic programs.

Division III

Division III is the largest NCAA division in terms of the number of participating schools and student-athletes. Schools in this division do not offer athletic scholarships; instead, student-athletes are supported through academic-based financial aid. The focus here is on the overall college experience — academics come first, and athletics are seen as an extension of that experience rather than a primary pursuit. Division III schools are often smaller liberal arts colleges and regional universities where the love of the sport drives participation.

College Bound Athlete

NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics)

The NAIA is a separate governing body from the NCAA and oversees athletic programs at smaller colleges and universities across the United States and Canada. While lesser known than the NCAA, the NAIA provides a legitimate and competitive avenue for student-athletes who may be overlooked at larger institutions. NAIA schools are divided into two divisions and offer athletic scholarships, giving student-athletes the opportunity to earn financial assistance while competing at a meaningful level.

For students being recruited by NAIA schools, eligibility requirements must be met through the NAIA Eligibility Center, which reviews academic credentials and amateur status. The NAIA can be an excellent fit for student-athletes seeking a balance of competitive sports, scholarship opportunities, and a strong sense of community.

To get a sense for which level to target, speak with your ELCA coach, and your club team coach. Ask them for their perspective on your chances of success in collegiate sports and what areas need improvement.

It is critical that athletics should only be one of your considerations when creating a college list. You should be investigating all of the other criteria like any other student would (size, location, major, etc). If you get injured, don't make a team, lose interest in the sport, don't like the coach, etc., you might be left with a school that doesn't match any of your interests. You also want to ensure that you have a reasonable chance of admission. While athletic ability can increase your chances of admission, only a few students are able to get admitted almost entirely on the basis of their athletic contribution.

The recruiting timeline will differ based on sport and on NCAA division. While some students will begin this process as early as sophomore year, others will find that they do not commit to a school until mid-way through their senior year. Work with the people around you to help generate a list of colleges. Your coach (who can weigh in on which teams would be an appropriate fit for your talents) will be able to provide you with a starting point. Once a college list is established, you should begin building relationships with teams and coaches. Contact the coaches at the colleges directly, informing them of your interest and your background. It is usually best to do this through an inquiry letter or email. Some colleges have inquiry forms on the athletics section of their websites. You should also create an athletics resume that is easy to submit to a coach and send that as appropriate. In addition, your coach may be willing to contact schools on your behalf. There are many rules regarding contacts between athletes and coaches of Division I and Division II schools. [Click here](#) for a better understanding based on individual sports.

College Bound Athlete

If a coach is responsive to your inquiries, he or she will often ask for film or come see you play. The coach might be present at one of your clinics or camps over the summer. Some coaches will maintain contact with you via text, email, and/or phone. A coach that maintains contact has continuing interest in your ability to play on his or her team. However, just as you are choosing between many schools, the coach is choosing among a wide pool of student-athletes. At some point, if you are a candidate this coach has interest in, a transcript and test scores (PSAT, SAT, or ACT) will be requested to assess academic fit. Although standardized testing is no longer required for NCAA eligibility, even colleges that don't require testing for admissions purposes may still request your scores to make sure that you are a good academic fit for the institution. If your academic background does not meet admissions expectations, you will be told to pursue other options.

If a student and coach make verbal commitments to one another, often the coach will ask the student to apply Early Decision or Early Action. It is important to keep in contact with your college counselor about these developments to help you determine if this is the best option for you. Sometimes Division I schools are less focused on the timing of the application, as a letter of intent can be signed either in November or February of senior year.

The NCAA has published a great resource for students and families called ["The Guide for the College-Bound Student- Athlete."](#)

Note: If you are considering Division I or II athletics, be sure to have a conversation with ELCA's NCAA Coordinator regarding your academic eligibility based on NCAA standards.

College Bound Athlete

The NCAA Eligibility Center was established to determine athletic eligibility for student-athletes in Division I or II sports. Using your GPA, the Eligibility Center identifies whether you meet the requirements necessary to play for an NCAA team. It is essential to complete the process as early as possible, especially if you are planning to make official visits.

To register for the Eligibility Center, you must complete your registration on the NCAA Eligibility Center web site and pay the requested fee. Contact the Academic Guidance Counselor to submit your official transcript.

Anyone playing an intercollegiate sport at the NCAA Division I or II level must be academically eligible to play as determined by the NCAA Clearinghouse. Students should submit paperwork to be declared eligible once they have completed their junior year. This may be done at <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>

Online Registration Instructions:

1. Click on "College Bound Athletes"
2. Complete registration information and submit.

To Be Certified by the Clearinghouse:

1. The completed Student Release Form and fee must be received at the Clearinghouse by the spring of the senior year.
2. An official transcript must be sent directly from every high school attended.
3. SAT or ACT scores must be sent directly from the testing agency if requested.
4. Final transcript must be sent. If all the above steps are completed, the college guidance office will send this automatically.

PlayNAIA.org is the official clearinghouse for NAIA eligibility. Prospective student athletes planning to play at an NAIA college or university must register. This may be done at <https://play.mynaia.org/>



Military Academies

There are five federal service academies, all of which offer an outstanding education and full four-year scholarships. Upon graduating, students receive Bachelor's degrees and are also commissioned as military officers (with certain exceptions). In return, students will accept an appointment and serve as a commissioned officer for a specified time after graduation, of which some of this time must be active duty, and the remainder can be served as inactive reserve. The five federal service academies are:

- U.S. Military Academy (Army) in West Point, New York
- U.S. Naval Academy (Navy/Marine Corps) in Annapolis, Maryland
- U.S. Air Force Academy (Air Force) in Colorado Springs, Colorado
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy (Coast Guard) in New London, Connecticut
- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, N.Y

From the start of their high school career, students interested in the service academies should aim to achieve A and B level grades in advanced courses when possible (AP courses are strongly recommended, with particular emphasis on English and Math). The service academies are very selective in their admission selection process in two distinct ways.

1) Unlike admission for other colleges and universities, the military academies require a fitness assessment during which students must prove strength and endurance through challenges including running, sit-ups, push-ups, and pull-ups, among others. A failing score will disqualify an applicant from admission. Students should check with each academy for specific requirements for the Candidate Fitness Assessment.

2) Another difference that exists within the admissions process for the academies is the need for a nomination from an elected official (the Coast Guard Academy does not require this). Most often these come from a member of Congress (US Representatives, US Senators, or the Vice President). The process of securing a nomination is competitive and lengthy so most students begin the process at the same time that they are completing their Pre-Candidate Questionnaire (Spring/summer junior year). The deadlines for the nominating sources vary and could be as soon as early September of your senior year. Because the nomination and appointment process is competitive students should seek all the nominations for which they are eligible.

Military Academies

Timeline for Military Academies

Freshman and Sophomore Year

Your focus should be on academics. Service Academies are looking for students who have earned A's and B's throughout high school.

- Participate in clubs or organizations in your school, community, or church with the hopes of becoming a leader in the organization by 11th grade.
- Begin to improve your physical strength and endurance by participating in your school's athletic teams, running, and practicing for the Candidate Fitness Assessment.
- Contact the academy and ask them to put you in contact with your Liaison Officer.
- Make sure the Academic and Guidance office and your parents are aware of your interest in the Academies.

Junior Year

Start early! Applying to Service Academies takes more time than applying to other colleges.

- Continue to challenge yourself academically.
- Make sure you perform well on the PSAT.
- Assume leadership positions in the clubs or organizations in which you are involved.
- Get fit! Continue to improve your physical conditioning through cross-country running and swimming, joining a strenuous team sport, and practicing for the Candidate Fitness Assessment (a requirement for admission)
- Apply to a Summer Leaders Experience in order to be a more highly competitive applicant. These are week-long Summer Programs during the summer before your senior year. You will experience firsthand what it means to be a cadet. It is possible to do multiple summer programs. Currently the Army, Air Force, and Navy have them. Ask your liaison officer to help you apply for these programs. Admission to the summer program is by invitation ONLY and is usually based on PSAT scores.
- Complete your "Pre-Candidate Questionnaire" as early as March 1st of your junior year.
- Begin the nomination process in the spring.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT in the spring.
- After preliminary screening by the academy, you will receive information about scheduling a medical exam with the Department of Defense Medical Review Board. Schedule your appointment early in case you need time to file for a medical waiver. All candidates must be found medically qualified before admittance to the academies.

Military Academies

Senior Year

- Secure your nominations and interviews. The application due dates can vary office to office, year to year, so be sure to carefully keep track of these dates. Notifications are distributed in the winter months.
- Take the Candidate Fitness Assessment.
- Spend a day with a cadet and schedule an overnight visit if possible.
- Submit your application by early January.

The academies will offer the majority of appointments to candidates from March to May. You will receive a letter directly from the academies notifying you of your offer of appointment.

Contact Information for U.S. Military Academies

Air Force: www.usafa.edu 1-800-423-8723

West Point: www.usma.edu 1-800-872-2769

Navy: www.usna.edu 1-800-872-6289

Coast Guard: www.uscg.edu 1-877-NOW-USCG

Merchant Marines: www.usmma.edu 1-866-546-4778

ROTC

ROTC The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is an option for students interested in serving in the military. ROTC offers a wonderful way to have your education paid for with guaranteed occupations waiting for you after graduation. Seventy-five percent of all military officers come through the ROTC program. There are four-year and three-year scholarships with obligation to serve after graduation. Students should apply early (summer before senior year).

ROTC students may attend any college that accepts ROTC scholarships. Students may even attend one college for class and take their ROTC classes at a different nearby college. For information on ROTC scholarships, contact the following:

ROTC (Army)

1-800-USA-ROTC

www.armyrotc.com

AFROTC (Air Force)

1-800-522-0033

www.afrotc.com

NROTC (Navy)

1-800-522-0033

www.nrotc.com

The Arts



Performing and Visual Arts

Much like the athletes, performing and visual artists will need to communicate with the departments at their respective colleges. You should have a specific resume or portfolio to showcase your talent. As a performing artist you will likely need to audition or present a portfolio.

Begin communicating with colleges no later than your junior year to learn their schedules and timetables for audition and portfolio requirements.

Videos and Portfolios

Take the time to fully develop any supporting documents you provide to colleges. It should be an example of your very best work. Creating an audition tape or portfolio should take weeks not something put together overnight.

Art schools vary in selectivity as much as any other colleges. Some art schools are highly selective and expect to see top level academic credentials as well as significant artistic talent and experience. Other art schools put an emphasis on demonstrated artistic ability but are less concerned with academic achievement level and test scores. Other art schools are career and vocationally oriented, offering certificate or two-year degree programs on an open-admission basis for any high school graduate.

Different School Settings

Four-Year Colleges/Universities: Attending a college or university means a student will be required to take liberal arts courses outside of their major. There is a diversity of majors in the event a student wishes to be in a setting where he or she could easily make a change in concentration without transferring colleges. Auditions/portfolios may or may not be required. Some universities have professional conservatories or art school programs within their institutions. Auditions/portfolios are required for such specialized programs.

Four-Year Performing and Visual Art Schools: These colleges only offer degrees in arts-related areas but typically require some liberal arts courses to graduate. Small and comprised of students with similar interests, there is less flexibility if students lose interest in his or her major.

Conservatories: Conservatories are professional schools that focus solely on the teaching of the performing arts. Typically, this is done with very little, if any, liberal arts coursework. Students who take this route are already far advanced in their craft and have often worked with private instructors for several years.

Vocational/Technical Colleges: These institutions exist as a way for a student to gain job-training in a specific field. The end result of these programs tends to be associate's degrees, certificates, or diplomas. Some students will go on to acquire a four year degree but often will use the career-focused education to get right out in the workforce.

Learning Differences in College



Most colleges today provide academic support services for qualified students. The student, with support of family and members of the high school community, should determine which option is the best given his or her specific needs. Learning support offices at colleges are available to speak to and meet with families to discuss whether that college can fully support the student. Colleges typically offer different levels of support as listed below:

Coordinated services: The most common among colleges. Participation is voluntary and students use what they need, when they need it. There is usually a specialized staff that oversees a wide variety of available services. They also work with faculty and the community at large to ensure students get what they need.

Comprehensive/structured programs: For these programs, an updated psycho-educational testing report (no more than three years old), including at minimum a WAIS or WISC test and educational testing, will be required. These colleges typically provide a structured program with required elements, such as a pre-college summer session and regularly scheduled sessions with college learning specialists. They assist students with course selection and in negotiating the various demands of college life. They provide assistance with academic tasks such as writing papers and studying for exams. They assist students in gaining access to needed accommodations, such as books on tape, note-takers, extended time for tests, or petitioning for reduced course loads or waivers of requirements. They provide tutoring and content-based assistance in specific course areas. While responsible use of the program is expected from a college student, these programs do provide a level of structure that can assist a student in making a transition to college.

Parents and students should be aware that all colleges and universities today are required to provide supportive services and appropriate accommodations for students with learning disabilities who attend the college. The type of services and the college or university personnel who provide these services vary considerably from college to college.

Many colleges have academic support services that are available to all students. Typical resources are Math labs and Writing labs, often staffed by student peer tutors and drop-in tutorial sessions of study groups. Students are expected to initiate requests for assistance, make and keep appointments with tutors, and take responsibility for seeking help when needed.

Below are several suggestions when searching for college programs for a student with learning disabilities:

1. Start your search early.
2. Have a comprehensive, up-to-date (within the last 2 – 3 years) learning disability evaluation.
3. Be able to demonstrate a good understanding of your learning strengths and weaknesses.
4. Be able to show that you are a responsible self-advocate.
5. Visit the colleges, the learning support programs, and ask lots of questions.

Technical / Vocational School Opportunities



For many students, trade and technical education offers a compelling and practical alternative to a traditional four-year college degree. Vocational and technical programs — covering fields such as electrician work, plumbing, HVAC, welding, healthcare technology, and information technology — provide hands-on, career-focused training that can be completed in as little as one to two years. Graduates often enter the workforce sooner, with less student debt, and in industries facing significant labor shortages, making their skills highly sought after. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, many skilled trades offer median salaries that are competitive with — and in some cases exceed — those of four-year degree holders. Choosing a technical path is not a lesser option; it is a smart, strategic decision that aligns education directly with workforce demand, offering students a clear and rewarding route to financial stability and professional fulfillment.

Georgia's Technical College System and Financial Support

Georgia residents have exceptional access to technical education through the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), one of the most robust state-run technical college networks in the country. To help make this education affordable, the state offers several powerful financial aid programs. The HOPE Grant is available to Georgia residents enrolled in a certificate or diploma program at a TCSG institution, requiring only a 2.0 GPA to qualify. In addition, the HOPE Career Grant is available to HOPE Grant-qualified students who enroll in select programs aligned with 12 high-demand industries in Georgia — fields where there are more jobs available than there are skilled workers to fill them. Since it is a grant, it does not need to be repaid, and when combined with the HOPE Grant, the two awards together can cover all tuition for eligible programs of study. For students who maintain a higher academic standing, the Zell Miller Grant is also available to Georgia residents pursuing a certificate or diploma, covering 100 percent of assessed tuition each semester for those who maintain a 3.5 GPA or higher. Together, these programs make technical education in Georgia not only a smart career move but also one of the most financially accessible paths available to students today.

For more information about technical schools and opportunities in Georgia, please visit the Technical College System of Georgia's website at <https://www.tcsg.edu/why-tcsg/>

Gap Year



Occasionally, students embark on the college search process and realize that they are not quite ready to take that next step. Perhaps they need to take a break to recharge (i.e. spend a year working), sometimes they want to broaden their horizons before committing to college for four years (i.e. travel), or some aren't happy with their college options and want another year to improve their academic record (i.e. a Post Graduate year at a boarding school). Regardless of the reason, this can be a wonderful and sometimes life-changing opportunity for students. Because this trend has become more popular over the past several years, there are more viable choices for students than in the past. And contrary to what you might think, colleges are very accepting of students who take this alternative route. When the students do ultimately matriculate, they tend to be more mature, focused, and energized about their studies. They also offer a different perspective in the classroom.

We recommend that students apply to colleges throughout their senior year while support is readily available. Once admitted, students can enroll by May 1st and then request a gap year. This holds their spot for the following year and avoids the need to apply to colleges while the student is engaged in their gap year. Before applying or enrolling, double check gap year policies with the admissions office to make sure it is a welcome pathway at the colleges that interest you.

Gap Year Resources

<https://www.gapyearassociation.org/>

<https://www.goabroad.com/>

<https://www.wheretherebedragons.com/>

<https://www.outwardbound.org/>

<https://www.collegetransitions.com/blog/best-christian-gap-year-programs/>

Financial Aid & Scholarships



College is a major investment, and one that usually has a strong return on that investment. It is important to have the financial talk early as a family about budget and costs. It is also important to not dismiss a school solely because of its “sticker price”. This is not necessarily the amount that families will need to pay. All colleges provide some type of financial assistance.

In general, there are two categories of financial aid:

1. Need based – grant money, loans, and work study awarded based on your family’s financial situation and the feasibility of paying for college.
2. Merit based – scholarships awarded based on talent and ability in academics or extracurricular accomplishments.

Applying for Financial Aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The FAFSA can be accessed and completed by visiting www.fafsa.ed.gov. The application cannot be filed before October 1 of your senior year. Each college/university will determine an individual amount of aid to offer you. This is determined by assessing your family income, assets, and what they believe is your family’s ability to pay for college tuition. Each college has its own priority filing date which you must be aware of. Need based aid may include loans, grants, and work study.

It is highly recommended and encouraged for all students and their families to complete the FAFSA regardless of financial need. Some colleges and universities use the FAFSA in determining some of the MERIT aid given. If you are only awarded student loans, you can always decline the offer. Colleges and universities also recommend completing the FAFSA should there be a change in circumstances with family or finances. Having the application completed will help to expedite the process for financial aid in such circumstances.

CSS Profile

The CSS Profile is required by many private colleges and considers students for additional aid funded through the individual institution. There are several public universities that use the CSS profile as well, such as Georgia Tech. While it does require more detailed information to complete the form, it gives a holistic view of the family’s finances besides what is only required on FAFSA. Check each college to see if it requires this form. Using the information you provide on the Profile form, the College Scholarship Service prepares a Need Analysis Report that colleges use to shape your Estimated Family Contribution and, thus, the college’s financial aid package. Pre-register for this form at [CSS Profile](#) sometime in the fall of senior year and file the rest of the form before your financial aid deadlines.

Financial Aid & Scholarships

Net Price Calculator

The Net Price Calculator is a tool that students can use to estimate their “net price” to attend a particular college or university. Net price is the difference between the “sticker” price (full cost) to attend a specific college, minus any grants and scholarships for which students may be eligible. Sticker price includes direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) and indirect costs (books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses). Each college’s financial aid webpage has access to a Net Price Calculator, so students and parents can get an estimate of the amount of aid a college will provide.

Student Aid Report

Students will receive the Student Aid Report once the FAFSA has been submitted. This report will indicate your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), or the amount the school believes you can pay. You can get a sense of what your EFC will be by using a financial aid calculator, such as the one available through www.finaid.org.

Calculating Financial Aid Award

- Cost of Attendance (COA): this total includes a college’s tuition, room and board, fees, books, and travel. It will vary, of course, with each college.
- Net-Price Calculator: All colleges must provide a net-price calculator on their website which allows families to estimate their COA using standardized inputs (i.e. savings, family size, etc) and the college’s financial aid and merit aid methodology. This tool can usually be found in the Financial Aid area of a college web site (although not always easy to find).
- Student Aid Index (SAI): this is an eligibility index number that helps a college determine how much federal aid you would be eligible for should you attend their college. The number results from the data on your FAFSA form. Four areas are included in the calculation of the SAI: Parental Income, Parental Assets, Student Income, and Student Assets.
 - Parental Contribution: is determined by your family’s net worth, or sum.

Financial Aid & Scholarships

Need-Based Financial Aid Package

Colleges will send you a financial aid letter, which will outline the amount of financial aid the school is offering. Most colleges provide a financial aid package that consists of:

- Grant money: these are funds typically provided by the college (and sometimes by the government) which you do NOT need to pay back. Sometimes, merit-based grant money is also included in a predominantly need-based financial aid award.
- Loans: these are typically federally-funded loans (Subsidized and Unsubsidized Stafford), with low interest rates, which you don't need to begin repaying until after you graduate. These loans are usually in the student's name, though loans are also available for parents to assume as well, if desired.
- Work-study: students may also be expected to earn a portion of their college expenses through some form of work-study program on campus. These are designated jobs at the school (i.e., library, food service, athletic center, etc.) that allow students to work part-time. The earnings from these jobs are expected to go toward the costs of college.

Here's some terminology to help you understand what colleges may tell you about their awarding procedure:

- Meeting 100% of demonstrated need: the financial aid package will cover the entirety of your demonstrated financial need.
- Gapping: some colleges do not meet the full financial need of every family. Instead, they will provide you partial funding to meet some of your family's need. This is called "gapping" because there will be a gap left between what you can afford and the COA that the college will not help you cover.
- Need blind: colleges that are need-blind make admission decisions without regard for the financial situation of the applicant's family. The admission process is separate from the financial aid process. Your admission decision is based on your merit, while your financial aid is determined by your family's financial need.
- Need aware: colleges that are need-aware may make admission decisions with some consideration of the family's financial situation; financial aid decisions may also take into account the strength of the student (i.e., a stronger applicant may be awarded a better financial aid package than a weaker applicant). In most cases, this will affect the last 10% of the class accepted, or a student placed on a wait list may learn that no funds are available.

Merit- Based Scholarships

Unlike need-based financial aid, merit-based aid is not awarded on the basis of your family's financial status. Some merit scholarships are granted by foundations and can be used at any college. Some colleges offer scholarships that can only be used at their institution. The money can vary from a small amount to cover books to a medium-sized amount to full-ride scholarships. Merit awards typically target a certain type of student, depending on the types of students that a college wishes to attract. You may find competitive merit scholarships in the following areas:

- Academic excellence
- Leadership
- Specific academic fields
- Athletics

At some colleges, you need to apply for merit scholarships directly. Check with the college to determine the list of scholarships available and determine what the application process requires.

Some colleges will also offer merit scholarship funds based on the quality of your candidacy. This is a way to discount the tuition and attract students that the college desires. You do not have to apply separately for these scholarships because the admission office determines recipients based on the application for admission.

The other sources for merit-based scholarships are foundations or private companies, which require separate applications and essays. Identifying these types of scholarships is time-consuming, and the competition is usually tough. Do not count on outside scholarships to be your main ticket to college. The financial aid that colleges provide – whether need-based or merit-based – remains the most common means of supporting students.

Georgia HOPE Scholarship Program

To be eligible for the HOPE Scholarship, students must have earned a minimum GPA of 3.0 in their core subjects, must meet HOPE Scholarship Rigor Requirements, and must be a legal resident of the state of Georgia. The HOPE Scholarship covers a percentage of the tuition at a Georgia state college or university. This percentage is voted by state officials annually and may cover between 90-100% of tuition. Students attending a private college/ university in Georgia may also be eligible for the HOPE Private Scholarship. This scholarship also covers a percentage of the college/university's tuition.

The Zell Miller Scholarship covers full academic tuition, if the student has earned at least a 3.7 GPA in his/ her core subjects, meets HOPE Scholarship Rigor Requirements, and has earned a score of at least 1200 on the critical reading and math portions of the SAT or a Composite Score of 25 on the ACT. Seniors must complete a Georgia HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application to be considered for the HOPE Scholarship.

HOPE Grant Award Amounts:

The HOPE grant covers a percentage of the tuition at a Georgia public technical college or public college or university for students seeking a certificate or diploma. The award amount is determined by the GSFC based on projected lottery revenues and expenditures.

Eligibility:

The HOPE Grant program is for students seeking a technical certificate or diploma, regardless of the student's high school grade point average or graduation date.

Applying for the HOPE Scholarship Programs

Apply for the HOPE Scholarship, Zell Miller Scholarship, and HOPE Grant by completing the FAFSA or completing the Georgia Finance Application (GSFAPPS) found on the Georgia Futures website. It is the student's responsibility to submit standardized test scores for the Zell Miller Scholarship.

For more information and to complete an application, visit www.GAfutures.org.

Scholarship Resources

- <https://www.raise.me/>
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>
- <https://www.scholarships.com/>
- <https://scholarshipamerica.org/>
- <https://thescholarshipssystem.com/>
- <https://scholarships360.org/>
- <https://www.fastweb.com/>

THANK YOU

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