**College Planning:**

**The Short List, The Application Process & Making the Most of Your College Visit**

by Kathy Leaver

**QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE MAKING THE LIST:**

1. Why do I want to go college?

2. How important is the size of the college?

3. How important is the college’s academic reputation?

4. How far away from or close to home am I willing to go? Urban? College town?

5. What does my perfect school look like? Buildings? Sports? Activities? Greek life? Religious groups?

6. If I am leaning toward a certain major, is it offered?

7. Can any special needs I may have be met? Study Skills? $? Physical limitations?

**THE SHORT LIST:** After answering these questions, put at least 3 colleges on your list. If you have a “reach” school, be sure to have a “safety” school. I also highly recommend having at least one in-state public institution on your list, as it may be your most affordable option.

**THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:**

**Spring of Junior Year**

\_\_\_\_\_Visit college websites and research, noting admissions requirements and deadlines.

\_\_\_\_\_Create a short list of colleges in which you are interested by narrowing your list to about three (unless they are

highly selective – then you need at least one safety school. Consider the fit in terms of size, location,

academics, extracurricular activities, cost, personal values, interests and needs.

\_\_\_\_\_Start making college visits with your parents & continue until a decision is made. Have fun!

\_\_\_\_\_If you are an athlete and haven’t yet registered for the NCAA or other athletic governing organizations, do so.

\_\_\_\_\_Prepare to take AP exams if applicable.

\_\_\_\_\_Be sure your resume is up to date.

\_\_\_\_\_Work hard this semester as these are the last grades that will appear on your transcript when you apply to

college.

\_\_\_\_\_Plan a challenging senior year. Take the hardest classes in which you are capable of succeeding.

\_\_\_\_\_Register for the June and/or fall ACT and SAT.

\_\_\_\_\_If your test scores are not as high as you expected, consider taking a testing preparation class.

**Senior Year**

\_\_\_\_\_Register for the ACT and SAT for the fall if you have not already. Plan to take SAT subj. tests if needed.

\_\_\_\_\_Revisit college websites noting deadlines, application procedures, & merit, dept., and alumni scholarships.

\_\_\_\_\_Write or update your high school résumé.

\_\_\_\_\_Begin essays as topics become available on apps – write, polish & proof. Email me if you need help.

\_\_\_\_\_Complete college applications, make copies of everything you send, & don’t miss any deadlines.

\_\_\_\_\_Find out how to apply for special programs such as honors colleges, performance groups and ambassadors.

\_\_\_\_\_Check out which colleges accept the *Common Application* (www.commonapp.org ) or the *Superapp*,

(www.connectedu.net/superapp).

\_\_\_\_\_Have official test scores sent to colleges that will not accept them from your transcript.

\_\_\_\_\_Request official transcripts through the counseling office to be sent to all colleges where you’re applying.

\_\_\_\_\_Inquire with your prospective colleges as to whether or not an application for admission automatically makes

you an applicant for scholarships or if you need to fill out a separate application for scholarships.

\_\_\_\_\_Be aware that there are many colleges with a scholarship deadline of December 1st.

\_\_\_\_\_Research all scholarship opportunities, general, departmental, and alumni for the colleges to which you are

applying & continue to look for outside scholarship opportunities.

\_\_\_\_\_If the college requires recommendations, ask teachers or counselors for letters at least 3 weeks before

deadlines.

\_\_\_\_\_Put your request in writing with instructions and give it to them, along with any recommendation forms and

your resume. (Remember a thank you note!)

\_\_\_\_\_If an interview is required for admission, scholarships, or special programs, practice first!!!!!

\_\_\_\_\_Avoid senioritis! Your senior year grades do count.

\_\_\_\_\_Attend college fairs & meet with college representatives when they visit your high school.

\_\_\_\_\_Register for your FAFSA pin numbers. (Parents and student) www.fafsa.ed.gov & begin gathering

necessary information to complete the FAFSA as soon after Jan. 1 as possible. Fed. Aid $ is given

first come, first serve basis.

\_\_\_\_\_Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) when it arrives.

\_\_\_\_\_Request mid-year reports for colleges that require them.

\_\_\_\_\_Apply for on-campus housing OR investigate off-campus housing if you are not planning to live in a

dorm.

\_\_\_\_\_Letters of admission and financial aid offers will arrive no later than early April. (Many of you will

hear about acceptance on a rolling basis throughout the year.) Review each carefully, and note all

reply deadlines.

\_\_\_\_\_Decide which college you will attend and notify them no later than May 1st, the National \_\_\_\_\_Candidate’s Reply Date. Accept financial aid/scholarships by deadlines, too. Responding late (or

not at all) can jeopardize your acceptance.

\_\_\_\_\_Send any required deposits, fees, and paperwork (i.e. orientation registration and health forms.)

\_\_\_\_\_Send a letter of non-acceptance to the other colleges to which you were accepted.

\_\_\_\_\_Read, sign, and send in a promissory note if you are borrowing money.

\_\_\_\_\_AP Exams are administered the first two weeks in May. Scores will be sent to the college you

indicate on your AP answer sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_Follow your school’s procedures to have your final transcript sent to your chosen college.

**THE CAMPUS VISIT IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL YOU HAVE IN MAKING A GOOD COLLEGE DECISION.**

**CALL** or register at least 2 weeks in advance to set up an appointment, reserve a spot for the admissions chat and tour, and then complete a pre-approved college visit form at your high school.

**REQUEST** to do the 1st two and anything else of interest to you:

1. Listen to an “admissions talk.”

2. Tour the campus. The student guides are great sources of information.

3. See any special facilities of interest to you.

4. Eat or have a drink in the cafeteria.

5. Speak to someone in any departments of your intended study.

6. Sit in on a class.

7. Possibly shadow a student.

8. See a dorm.

**QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED DURING THE CAMPUS VISIT:**

1. Do the physical surroundings appeal to me? Do I like the distance from home, the urban or college town setting?

2. Does the overall college size appeal to me? Average class size? As a freshman? As an upper classman?

3. Would I be able to have the faculty/student relationship that I desire?

4. Does the college offer my major area of study? Or many options, if I haven’t chosen a major?

5. Is there quantifiable evidence of quality in my particular area of study? Accreditation?

6. What is the accessibility of computers and the internet? Must I bring my own computer?

7. What is the make-up of the faculty? PhD’s, MFA’s, teaching assistants…

8. Are there clubs, intramurals, and organizations that interest me?

9. What is in place to ensure safety on campus?

10. What is the make-up of the student body?

11. What support services are available to me?

12. How difficult is it to get the classes I need? If it’s difficult as a freshman, does it improve later?

13. Do I realistically meet the criteria for admittance?

14. What are the scholarship and financial aid opportunities for me?

15. DO I FEEL AT HOME ON THE CAMPUS?

**AFTER** the official tour, roam around campus and the town on your own. Take a parent along if possible and take notes and pictures to help you remember everything!!! It’s not dorky, it’s smart!