

College Planning Guide for Juniors

Notre Dame High School School Counseling Department

3417 Church Rd
Easton, PA 18045
Phone: (610) 867-7012
Fax: (610) 867-9378

Staff

Mr. Ryan Allen

School Counselor for students with last names beginning with A-K

rallen@ciu20.org

Mrs. Brandie Uliana

School Counselor for students with last names beginning with L-Z

buliana@ndcrusaders.org

Mrs. Michelle Vail

Administrative Assistant

mvail@ciu20.org

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The formal process of selecting a college begins in junior year. The process can be challenging, confusing, and at times very stressful, but it doesn't have to be! **The College Planning Guide** has been developed to assist both students and parents as they go through the process of being accepted at the school of their choice. This guide will serve as a reference and should be kept in an accessible place until a final college decision has been made and a deposit has been sent to one particular college.

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

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

The school counselors will meet with all juniors periodically throughout the year to keep them informed of important dates and timelines in the college selection process. All juniors will be interviewed individually and have an opportunity to begin a college search based on information they share with their counselor. They are encouraged to share this information with their parents/guardians, as the counselor will work closely with your child in preparing, selecting, and applying to possible colleges. The school counseling office is available to assist you through this process and if you need to ask questions, please feel free to contact us at (610) 867-7012.

Sincerely,

The Notre Dame High School Counseling Office

I. General Timeline for Career and College Planning for Juniors

- September** - Continue to explore possible careers (if you have not done so already, take the **Career Cluster Finder** survey and **Career Interest Profiler** in Naviance) and prepare for PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test) using the PSAT Student Guide that you will receive during your class meeting and/or your Khan Academy account if you created one during your sophomore year. If you are an athlete interested in playing college sports at the Division I or Division II level and you have not yet registered with the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Clearinghouse, you should do so now at www.eligibilitycenter.org. After you register, your school counselor will upload your transcript to the NCAA Clearinghouse and it will be evaluated by NCAA staff to ensure that you have met amateurism standards and are academically prepared for college coursework. The Pennsylvania Association of Catholic Colleges will host their annual Fall College Fair during a school day at Notre Dame High School this month. At this college fair, you'll be able to talk with admissions counselors from the 26 Catholic colleges in Pennsylvania and gather information.
- October** - All 11th grade students at Notre Dame will take the PSAT a final time this month. This test serves as preparation for the SAT and can also help you qualify for scholarships, so do your best on it.
- November** - Talk to adults (teachers, relatives, professionals) about their career choices and school choices.
- December** - Counselors will begin meeting individually with juniors to discuss post-high school plans. PSAT/NMSQT results are returned and discussed. When students retrieve their PSAT scores through their College Board account, they are also provided with instructions on creating an account with Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) and connecting this with their College Board account. Khan Academy works with the College Board to provide all students who take the PSAT with a **free, personalized online SAT study guide** and practice tests.

If you are interested in applying to one of the five United States **Service Academies** (West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, the Coast Guard Academy, or the Merchant Marine Academy) where students are commissioned as officers in their respective military service branch upon completion and agree to a service obligation of at least five years, you should begin completing the first steps of the application now. Seriously consider applying to the Summer Programs offered by the academies as well.

- January** - Information on the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests will be discussed. An optional practice SAT/ACT combination test may be held on a Saturday so students can obtain a better understanding of the structure of each test.

International students who plan to attend college in the United States should register for a March or April TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test date at www.ets.org/toefl. You may wish to take the TOEFL more than once, so don't wait until the last minute.

- February** - Colleges recommend that the SAT and/or ACT be taken at least once in the spring of Junior year and once in the fall of Senior year. Test dates for the SAT and ACT are available online (www.collegeboard.org and www.actstudent.org), in your Naviance account, and in the school counseling office. When you register for one of these tests, we strongly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to select four (4) colleges to send your scores to for **FREE**. If you wait until after you receive your scores to send them to colleges, the cost will be \$12.00 per college. Course selections for Senior year will begin around this time and should be taken seriously. Remember, colleges take into consideration the strength of your academic schedule; if you qualify, challenge yourself with Honors, AP, and dual enrollment courses, but do not set yourself up for failure.

- March-** If you have not yet registered for a spring SAT or ACT Test, you should do so now. Again, don't forget to take advantage of the opportunity to have your scores sent to four (4) colleges at no extra charge. Begin to seriously consider which colleges you would

like to apply to and research their application deadlines and requirements. All of this information can be found in your Naviance account.

- April -** Consider whether you want to take another SAT or ACT test in June. If you are considering applying Early Decision to any colleges, check out exactly what your intended college requires and their deadlines. Attend college open houses and college fairs.
- May -** Evaluate the colleges that interest you (keeping in mind such factors as geographic location, size of the school, costs, tuition, room and board, travel expenses, fees), and majors. Naviance and college websites will supply you with the most updated information.
- June/July -** Attend any open house or preview programs offered by the colleges that you are interested in. If no open house or program dates fit your schedule, contact the admissions office to schedule a campus tour during a time that works for your family. If any colleges that you are interested in are too far away to visit easily, contact the admissions office anyway to express your interest in the school and request information.
- August -** Get in any last-minute college visits and try to narrow down your list of colleges to 3 to 7 schools by September. Review the essay prompts for the Common Application and begin writing your college essay.

II. Sources of Information About Colleges

Naviance - This is an online software program that you and your counselor will use to explore possible careers, colleges, majors, scholarships, and matches to your personal profile. You may also use this program to contact college admissions offices directly. Students and parents can access Naviance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from any computer or device with an internet connection. Parents will receive an email halfway through their students' freshman year with instructions for setting up their own account. If you did not receive this email, please contact your child's school counselor for instructions.

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

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

College Catalogs – Some colleges send copies of their school catalogs to high schools. These are available for student use, but remember, college websites contain the most up-to-date information. Almost all colleges have a link on their homepage where students can request that information be sent to their home. Usually a view book and general information will be sent in reply to this request.

Visit By College Representatives – Colleges will often send admission reps to visit high schools to talk with prospective students interested in their college. These visits usually take place in the Fall. The schedule for these visits is found in your Naviance account, in the school counseling office, and on the daily announcements. Representatives usually come supplied with copies of their college view book, application information, program specifics, and contact information. If you have a college listed in your “Colleges I’m Thinking About List” in Naviance, you will automatically receive an email if that college schedules a visit to Notre Dame.

Campus Visit – Most admissions representatives recommend a personal visit to their campus. This affords candidates the opportunity to observe facilities and to take a brief look at the campus life of the college. It also allows prospective students the chance to talk informally with students attending the college. Some colleges will arrange overnight visits, and some colleges require an interview. Familiarize yourself with the specifics that your schools will expect of you.

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

College Fairs – Usually several colleges meet in a central location and set up information tables for prospective students and parents. Literature on majors, clubs, organizations, financial aid and special programs along with applications are available for students to take. The school year usually begins with the Catholic Colleges of PA visiting Notre Dame High School, and another college fair is held every Spring.

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

III. Admissions Procedures and Terminology

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

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

Early Decision (ED): Some colleges follow a procedure by which a student may apply to his/her **first-choice** college early in their senior year with notification of an acceptance or rejection in December. **You should only apply early decision to ONE college.**

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

Candidates who are not accepted under a college's Early Decision Plan are usually considered, with the candidates' permission, to be considered under regular admissions procedures. Applicants should

check to see what percentage of an incoming class is generally accepted under an Early Decision Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Degree Types

Associate Degree: You can usually earn an associate degree with two (2) years of full-time college study. These degrees are most often offered by community colleges and career/technical colleges.

Bachelor's or Baccalaureate Degree: This degree typically requires four (4) years of full-time college study.

Master's Degree: A master's degree usually requires two (2) additional years of study beyond a Bachelor's Degree.

Doctoral Degree: A doctoral degree (such as a Ph.D.) typically requires four (4) years of study beyond a Bachelor's Degree. People who earn doctoral degrees may use the title "Dr."

Professional Degree: Professional degrees generally require at least a bachelor's degree before a student can enroll, and usually require at least three (3) additional years of study beyond the bachelor's degree. Students who earn these degrees become licensed to work in specific professions such as medicine (M.D.) or law (J.D.).

IV. College Visits

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

Helpful Hints:

1. Plan your visit in advance. Call, write, or email the admissions office to set up an appointment and indicate your areas of interest.
2. Visit when school is in session. (Open House programs are good for an overview of the college but they don't allow time for interviews, class observations, or specific questions).
3. Allow yourself enough time to get a "feel of the campus." A two to three hour visit should give you enough time for a good tour, an interview, and time to sit in on a class or explore financial aid (in general, it's a good idea not to visit more than two colleges on a given day).

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

Things to do before your visit:

1. Check out the college website, focusing on their admission requirements. Take a virtual tour of the campus and look through any materials that were sent to you.
2. Consider taking an unofficial copy of your transcript with you. You can request this from your school counselor.
3. Do some homework on the school. Prepare some questions and consider what questions you might be asked.
4. Make sure you know where you are going and allow enough time to get there. Remember to **BE ON TIME!**

Should your parents accompany you?

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

V. College Interviews

Your presence on the campus and your readiness to talk about yourself, your college plans, and to seek information about how this school matches your interest and needs are all important indications of your seriousness and interest in the college. In addition, the exchange of information and impressions gained by you and the admissions counselor during the interview should be meaningful.

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

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

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

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

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Name three adjectives that best describe you.
2. How does your family feel about you going away to school?
3. How did you select this school?
4. What magazines do you read?
5. What is the last book you read outside of school, and why did you select it?
6. What's the most significant activity in which you've participated?
7. Have you had any part-time jobs? Did you enjoy them? What kinds of jobs have you had?
8. How does your high school grading system work?
9. Does your school rank its students? If so, where do you rank? (Helpful hint: Notre Dame does not rank students.)
10. What field of study do you plan to major in? Why?
11. What do you think people do in that field?
12. If your SATs are low, why do you think that is? What are you doing to improve them?
13. Do you know what the average SAT score is for an incoming freshman?
14. If you are asking for financial aid, how do you plan to pay for college?
15. What career areas have you considered during high school?
16. What do you do in your free time?
17. Do you enjoy your social life? Do you use social media outlets like Facebook, SnapChat, or Instagram? If we looked at your accounts, what would they reveal?

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

VI. Sign up procedure for college representative visits at Notre Dame.

1. College visits are usually announced during daily announcements and are always posted on Naviance. If you have added a college to your "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list, you will be sent an email notifying you when they will visit Notre Dame.
2. Interested students must sign up via Naviance or by stopping in at the school counseling office and speaking to Mrs. Vail no later than

2:15 PM the school day prior to the scheduled visit. You will be issued a pass during homeroom on the day of the visit.

3. Keep in mind that a test, quiz, or presentation scheduled for the time of the college visit takes precedence over any appointment with a college representative. If you cannot attend a college visit that you have signed up for, ask your school counselor to collect information from the representative to give to you later. You may also fill out an information card with your name and contact information so the representative can put you on the college's email list.

VII. Financial Aid

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

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

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

Types of Financial Aid

There are three basic types of financial aid:

1. **Grants and/or Scholarships**. This is free money that you do not have to repay. Grants are usually awarded on the basis of need. Scholarships may be awarded on the basis of need or some other criteria such as academic achievement or special talent.
2. **Loans** must be repaid, usually after you have graduated or left school.

3. **Work-Study** involves earning money through a job arranged by the college.

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

Applying for Financial Aid

Three basic forms are used by colleges other than their own form. They are the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), The College Scholarship Service Financial Aid Profile (CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE), and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Form (PHEAA) which is included in the FAFSA for the State of Pennsylvania. Check with each college to see which forms you need to submit. An important thing to know about financial aid for college is that the guidelines change nearly every year. **Read all your information on financial aid carefully. DEADLINES ARE VERY IMPORTANT. MISSING A DEADLINE CAN RESULT IN NOT RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID.**

Find out what the deadlines are and stick to them. Financial aid is usually given on a rolling basis, but usually the earlier you apply the better. FAFSA forms and CSS PROFILE forms are available on-line and must be filed electronically.

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

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

Raise.me

A more recent innovation on the financial aid front is the concept of “Micro-Scholarships.” These are typically smaller amounts of money awarded for accomplishments during high school. For example, some colleges will award \$500 for every “A” earned in grades 9-12, or \$50 for every leadership position held in a club. To find out if any of the colleges you are interested in participate, visit www.raise.me. Currently, close to 300 colleges and universities participate in this scholarship program.

GoingMerry.com

Going Merry was started in 2016 by two grad school classmates at Stanford University. It can be described as the “Common App for scholarships.” Students create a profile and are matched with scholarships that they fit the criteria for. Students can submit scholarships applications through the site as well, and can even have their counselor/teachers upload their transcript and recommendation letters to attach directly to their scholarship applications. Get started at www.goingmerry.com

VIII. SAMPLE LETTERS

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

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

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

IX. Guidance Department Names and Numbers

Notre Dame High School CEEB Code	391133
School Address	3417 Church Rd Easton PA 18045
Notre Dame Website	www.ndcrusaders.org
School Counseling Office Phone	(610) 867-7012 x133: Mr. Allen x104: Mrs. Uliana
School Counseling Office Fax	(610) 867-9378

X: APPENDIX

**SAMPLE LETTER
REQUESTING COLLEGE INFORMATION**

Date

Director of Admissions
(College Name)
Address

Dear Admissions Counselor:

I am currently a student at Notre Dame High School in Easton, Pennsylvania and I plan to graduate in June of 20__.

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

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

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)

(Your Name) Printed
Your Address
Your email

**SAMPLE LETTER
REQUESTING AN INTERVIEW**

Date

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

Dear Admissions Counselor:

I am a senior at Notre Dame High School, in Easton, Pennsylvania and I am planning to visit (name of college) between (date range) . As I am interested in applying for your (college major) program for the Fall of 20 , I would appreciate having an interview and tour of the campus on either (date #1) or (date #2) if possible. I will also be applying for financial aid and would appreciate an opportunity to have an interview with a representative from the financial aid office on the same day.

If these dates are inconvenient, I would be able to visit on (date #3) . I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your name Signed

Your name Typed

Your Address

Your Email

**SAMPLE LETTER
WITHDRAWING AN APPLICATION**

*Sometimes circumstances intervene which make it necessary for a student to withdraw an application even before he/she received a decision from a college. If you are accepted to a school that you applied to using an Early Decision application plan, you will need to inform any other colleges that you applied to that you are withdrawing your application. **You will need to do this in writing so the college has a record of your withdraw from the applicant pool.***

DATE

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

Dear Admissions Counselor:

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

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

Please accept my thanks for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name Signed

Your Name Printed or Typed
Your Address
Your email