

The Four-Year College and University Process

College and Career Center

Southridge High School

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The Four-Year College and University Process

Four-year colleges and universities usually offer a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree. Some also offer graduate and professional degrees.

Within the four-year college choices, you will find public and also private/independent schools. Both public and private/independent colleges and universities tend to be liberal arts institutions which means that they have a "curriculum aimed at imparting general knowledge and developing general intellectual capacities, in contrast to a professional, vocational, or technical curriculum."

(Encyclopedia Britannica)

Public institutions are supported by tax dollars, with tuition fees based upon residence in the state. Many public colleges and universities require a basic application and fee, but they don't generally require letters of recommendation. However, be sure to check the individual requirements for each school to which you are applying.

Private or independent colleges come in many shapes and sizes. Some have special characteristics that draw specific students to them. These characteristics may be things such as:

- *Single sex
- *Faith-based
- *Historically Black Colleges
- *Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Most private/independent colleges require essays and letters of recommendation as part of their application. Some may share the Common Application (See the Application Types section) and the **CSS PROFILE**. It is important to look at each school's specific admission requirements and deadlines.

CSS profile (www.profileonline.collegeboard.com) is an online application that collects information used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to award institutional aid funds. You may file as early as October 1st but should file no later than two weeks before the *earliest* priority filing date specified by your colleges or programs.

Colleges and universities within the USA and some international, require students/parents to fill out an application with **Fafsa** (www.fafsa.ed.gov). All *federal funds* are awarded based on this application. Parents/students may request a pin number anytime but the actual filing for Fafsa is available after January 1st.

Note: Many Independent and Private Schools have a high price. Often times they offer a financial aid packet that includes scholarships, grants, work-study and loans. Do not overlook these schools because of the price. When schools want you to attend, they will do whatever they can to help you fund the education.

Oregon's Public Universities

In Oregon, the seven public universities, their branch campuses, centers and affiliated



institutions are known as the Oregon University System or OUS.

You can access information about all of these campuses in one place through the OUS website at: <http://www.ous.edu/>. A link to the OUS Essential Information Page is also available on the counseling page of Sunset's website.

Each of the seven universities distributes their own application forms. You can request a paper application from the individual university's website or apply on-line. The universities also have varying application deadlines. (These are summarized on the following page for you.) Watch the application deadlines and apply as early as possible. If you plan to apply to the honors college at OSU or U of O, you must complete both the general application and the honors college application.

Here is a key of abbreviations used on the following page: **EOU** = Eastern Oregon University **OIT** = Oregon Institute of Technology **OSU** = Oregon State University **PSU** = Portland State University **SOU** = Southern Oregon University **UO** = University of Oregon **WOU** = Western Oregon University

OUS Special Admissions Requirements

Did you know? Each university admits approximately 5% of its entering freshman class through the special admission process. The special admission process is used when students do not meet one or more of the admission requirements listed below.

Here is some background information: in high school, there are a certain set of requirements for graduation. However, for college there are entrance requirements that may be very different than the high school requirements and they may be at a much higher standard.

The most *significant difference* that students need to be aware of is that colleges **DO NOT consider "D" grades to be passing grades. So, if you passed a class in high school with a "D", an OUS school will not count that as passing for their admissions.** Please talk to your counselor if you have earned "Ds" in your high school classes and want to attend a four year university after graduation.

If a student does not meet these minimal requirements for college admissions, he/she will need to apply to the colleges using the "Special Admit Process". This will require that he/she includes additional materials along with the regular admission application, official transcript, and SAT or ACT test results. Each college specifies which additional materials are needed for their particular college. **It is very important that you look on each individual college's website to make sure that you get the correct information about their Special Admission Process.**

Here are the websites for the Oregon University System's Colleges:

Eastern Oregon University: <http://www.eou.edu/>
Oregon Institute of Technology: <http://www.oit.edu/>
Oregon State University: <http://www.oregonstate.edu/>
Portland State University: <http://www.pdx.edu/>
Southern Oregon University: <http://www.sou.edu/>
University of Oregon: <http://www.uoregon.edu/>
Western Oregon University: <http://www.wou.edu/>

Application Types

Regular Application

The college application is your opportunity to make a good impression on the college of your choice. You won't get a second chance to make that first impression!

With the exception of the community colleges, the college application process begins in the fall of your senior year. Obtain the applications by contacting the colleges directly via telephone, email or by visiting their websites. Make sure to keep track of filing deadlines.

NOTE: For students applying to the California State Universities and the Universities of California, there is one application students can use to apply to all the campuses. Both California systems are asking that students apply online and be aware that their application processes are done in November.

Common Application

The Common Application is the recommended form for over 300 private colleges and universities for admission to their undergraduate programs. Many of these institutions use the form exclusively, and give equal consideration to the Common Application and the colleges' own forms. You can find the Common Application online at www.commonapp.org.

The concept is simple; students complete 1 Common Application; and submit it to any of the participating colleges. It simplifies the process and eliminates duplication. Be sure to check the common application index or with individual colleges for supplemental requirements and essays.

A few of the 315 colleges that use the Common Application are: Seattle U, Reed, University of Puget Sound, the Ivy league schools, George Fox, Lewis and Clark, Gonzaga, Duke, University of Denver, the Claremont Colleges, Boston College and Boston University. A complete list can be found at the website listed above or in the College and Career Center.

Universal Application

The Universal Application is similar in concept to the Common Application. It is a single form that can be used to apply to over 80 colleges and universities. Some of the colleges that accept this application format are: Brandeis University, Concordia College of New York, Drexel University, Embry-Riddle, Hamline, Towson University and Wake Forest University. You can find the Universal Application online at: www.universalcollegeapp.com.

It is more and more common for colleges to have an online application process; in fact, many colleges encourage or prefer that process. Become familiar with colleges' websites to figure out what they recommend.

Steps in Applying

Step 1

If needed, ask your counselor to write a letter of recommendation. Have the "Counselor Letter of Recommendation Questionnaire" (available from your counselor) completed as much as possible prior to meeting with your counselor. There may also be a section of your application for your counselor to complete in order to verify GPA, test scores and college prep courses. Allow six weeks for the letter to be written and forms to be filled out. Also, be sure to give your counselor a pre-addressed and stamped (with 2 stamps) envelope for each college so that he/she can mail the information directly to the school. If applying online, see if there is an electronic version of the counselor form that can be completed instead.

Step 2

If needed, ask your teachers to write a letter of recommendation. Be sure to give them an Awards and Activities Resume. If they will be mailing the letter directly to colleges, give them a pre-addressed stamped envelope.

Step 3

Complete the Transcript Request form to order as many official copies of your transcript and test score sheet as necessary for number of colleges to which you are applying. A sample of the form is available online at: www.sunsetapollos.org/counseling. Actual forms are also available in the Counseling Office. Please note: most colleges are now wanting you to have test scores sent directly from the ACT and SAT testing organizations. Score reports can be ordered through their websites (see the Website section at the end of this guide for site addresses).

Step 4

Complete the applications to colleges. If you are submitting a paper application, it should be neat and legible and written in pen. Depending on where you apply, you may need to write an essay and include it with your application.

Step 5 Keep a copy of everything.

Step 6

Pick up your official transcripts and test scores from the Counseling Office personnel and mail these directly to the colleges to which you are applying.

Step 7

You are responsible for making sure your completed college admission application is mailed. Be sure to include or check on the following:

1. Completed application form with all required signatures.
2. Activities and Awards Resume.
3. Check or money order for the application fee.
4. Essay
5. Official transcript and test scores (can be sent separately).

6. Separately sent letters of recommendation (if applicable).

Writing the Essay

With an understanding of what colleges are looking for in your essay and a bit of planning, it could be the highlight of your application, perhaps even the factor that tips the scale in your favor.

An essay takes a topic, whether it is earthshaking or everyday, whether it is about you or something that is important to you, and examines it in personal terms. Think of the essay as a perfect forum to display your individuality, creativity, and above all your ability to communicate.

Colleges want to know more about you than they can learn from transcripts or recommendations.

There is no right or wrong answer to a college essay question. And, how you say something is just as important as what you say. Schools want you to tell them how you are different from other applicants, but they also look for good written expression as well.

Try taking chances. If you are funny, it's okay to use a humorous style. Take some risks and let your personality show. However, be sure to answer the question and to write professionally. Always make sure that you express who you are and what makes you unique. Admissions officials say students do best when they write about something they really know, not about something they feel they should know.

The Dos and Don'ts

Do

- try to encapsulate the main idea in one sentence before writing.
- write clearly--if it sounds vague, change it.
- use words with which you feel comfortable
- express, not impress
- edit and rewrite until your essay says what you mean
- check all spelling and grammar
- make sure the correct name of the college to which you are applying is on the essay
- be specific and use details
- let the first draft sit awhile without reading it, then come back to it
- have another person double check it before submitting

Don't

- use slang
- try to be "cute"
- try not to use common essay topics
(building a house in Mexico or how the death of one person changed your life.)
- use words you cannot define
- begin your essay with "My name is....."
- digress from the original topic
- continue your essay beyond the specified number of words
- answer a topic not asked
- be too general—focus on one meaningful episode in your life rather than a complete history
- send poetry, a self portrait, or write in a circle.

Letters of Recommendation

Colleges request letters of recommendation to get a picture of you from the point of view of those who have worked with you. The letter should help you stand out based on your own ability. Be honest about who you are. In general, letters of recommendation are needed only for private colleges or universities. Public colleges or universities will usually ask for a letter of recommendation if a student does not meet the admission requirements.

Your best bet is to talk to your teachers, coaches, or employers. Before you ask someone for a recommendation, make sure he or she knows you well, and is likely to provide a flattering picture. If you ask someone and sense any hesitation, don't take the chance of getting a less-than-stellar letter.

Allow the person sufficient time to write a thoughtful letter. It is helpful to share your Activities and Awards Resume and drafts of essays, in order to provide background information about you. If the letter is to be mailed directly to the college, provide a stamped addressed envelope. It is appropriate to send a thank-you note to anyone writing you a letter of recommendation.

Teacher Recommendations

There are two types of teacher recommendations. The first is the "informal". This is the golden rod form in the counselor recommendation packet. It is turned in to your counselor and used in writing your composite counselor letter of rec. The second type is the "formal" recommendation, which is sent directly to a college upon your request.

A Composite Counselor Letter of Recommendation:

Is written by your counselor in your senior year. This letter is written with input from you, your teachers, outside references and your parent(s).

Campus Visit and Interview

The Campus Visit and Interview will complete your knowledge of the college or university. It can aid you in making your final decision. In addition, it will help round out the college's picture of you as an individual.

Visiting a Campus

- It is best to be there when classes are in session. However, if visiting a whole group of colleges means putting your academic work in jeopardy, think about visiting during the summer.
- **TELEPHONE** the admissions office well in advance of your visit to schedule a tour, an interview, and arrangements to stay overnight on campus when possible. Remember that at certain times of the year interviews are in great demand.
- Spend as much time as possible talking to students on campus and asking them questions. Ask students how they like the school, the food, the living facilities, etc.
- Pick up a copy of the student newspaper to see what current issues and activities are happening on the campus.

The Interview

The College Perspective:

- A school that admits 90% of its applicants often don't require an interview, but the college that admits 30% may require one and consider it very important, especially for borderline decisions.
- If the interview is an "evaluative" interview, it will help round out the picture of you as an applicant. Many schools have active alumni interview programs, so if you are unable to arrange a campus visit you should be certain to inquire about the possibility of an alumni interview in the Portland area.
- All of the major steps in the college search process should involve the students and the parents, if possible. When arriving at a college's admissions reception area, however, the student should take the lead by announcing that he or she is there to see the admissions officer.
- Parents should not expect to sit in on the interview. Meeting the interviewer at the admissions office is fine, but parents should plan to leave and explore the campus while their son or daughter is in the interview. If parents have questions about the school it is appropriate to ask them after the student has finished his or her interview. Most admission officers will try to make time to talk with parents as well.

The Student Perspective:

- Many college applicants regard the interview with apprehension, and even fear. Don't fall into that trap! An interview is a two-way exchange of information and most interviewers genuinely want to be helpful. Try to **BE YOURSELF!**
- What is appropriate dress? Again, be yourself but be neat and well groomed. A skirt or slacks and sweater for women, and slacks and a button down shirt or sweater for men are appropriate.
- Arrive on time for your interview. Ask the receptionist for the interviewer's card so that you can refer to him or her by name and refer back to it when you write your follow-up letter. If it is an alumnus interviewing you, be sure you write down his/her name and make sure you have the correct spelling.
- Write your interviewer a thank you note when you return home.
- Before you go into the interview, make a list of the important questions that you want answered. **DO NOT** ask questions about something you can easily find out by reading the catalog and view books that the college has sent you.

Sample Questions for the Interview

It is OK to go into your interview with a written list of questions. It is also OK to take notes on the answers you get to your questions.

1. How diverse is the campus?
2. What about the social life? What might take place on a typical weekend? What types of entertainment and lectures are brought to the campus? If there are "Greeks" (fraternities and sororities) on campus, to what extent do they dominate the social scene?
3. What are the athletic facilities, (indoor and outdoor)? If you are interested in a specific sport, ask about it.
4. What percent of last year's freshman class returned as sophomores? Why did people leave? How easy is it for freshmen to get classes?
5. Which departments are considered to be outstanding; which are mediocre or weak? What opportunities exist for independent study or off-campus programs?
6. How are the library and computer facilities?
7. Are there any undergraduate classes taught by graduate students or teaching assistants? How many courses have enrollments over 50, 100 or 200 students?
8. What is the school's policy regarding credit for high school Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate exam results?
9. Who is available to help me choose the proper classes?
10. What do students like and dislike about living on campus?

Playing Sports in College

Athletics are an exciting part of the college experience for some students. To be eligible to play sports in college, just like in high school, there are some specific requirements and procedures to follow.

NCAA- Division I and II

In order to be eligible for athletic teams at universities that are part of the NCAA, students must register with the NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse provides the following summary of steps for junior and senior year:

Grade 11

Register with the eligibility center.

Make sure you are still on course to meet core-course requirements (verify you have the correct number of core courses and that the core courses are on your high school's 48-H with the eligibility center).

After your junior year, have your high school guidance counselor send a copy of your transcript. If you have attended any other high schools make sure a transcript is sent to the eligibility center from each high school.

When taking the ACT or SAT, request test scores to be sent to the eligibility Center (the code is "9999").

Begin your amateurism questionnaire.

Grade 11

When taking the ACT or SAT, request test scores to be sent to the eligibility center (the code is "9999").

Complete amateurism questionnaire and sign the final authorization signature online on or after April 1 if you are expecting to enroll in college in the fall semester. (if you are expecting to enroll for spring semester, sign the final authorization signature on or after October 1 of the year prior to enrollment.)

Have your high school guidance counselor send a final transcript with proof of graduation to the eligibility center.

There is more detailed information about their procedures and an entire section for prospective student athletes on their website:

<https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>.

NCAA- Division III Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible, an entering freshman in a Division III school must satisfy the following:

- The eligibility rules and requirements of the enrolling institution
- The eligibility rules of the athletic conference in which the institution holds membership

NAIA Eligibility Regulations

Freshman Eligibility Requirements (for more information see www.naia.org).

1. An entering freshman student must be a graduate of an accredited high school or be accepted as a regular student in good standing as defined by the enrolling institution.
2. An entering freshman student must meet two of the three entry level requirements:

- A minimum score of 18 on the Enhanced ACT or 860 on the SAT.

NOTE: In order to meet the requirement of Article V, Section C, item 2, paragraph A above, an entering freshman taking the SAT as of March 1, 2005 must achieve a score of 860 or higher on the Critical Reading and Math sections.

- An overall high school grade point average of 2.000 or higher on a 4.000 scale.

- Graduate in the upper half of the student's high school graduating class.