



# ANATOMY OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION Program Guide

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➡ **BEFORE YOU BEGIN:** This workshop requires minimal prep, however, it is strongly recommended that you read and review the program guide along with the handout before meeting with students.

## ANATOMY OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION OBJECTIVE & INCLUDED TOPICS

To provide high school students with information about applying to colleges, including staying on schedule, filling out applications, what students will need, and keeping track; *Timeline for College Applications, Application Dos and Don'ts, Early Action vs. Early Decision, The Common Application, Denied/Waitlisted Information, Letters of Recommendation*

## BEFORE THE WORKSHOP/SESSION

This workshop is appropriate for students in 11th and 12th grades. Bring printed college applications for students to complete as a part of the workshop or have students complete applications online, if time allows. Invite a college admissions officer to speak about the college application process. Consider hosting a college application night with students and parents/guardians to complete applications and answer any questions from participants about the process.

## STEP ONE TIME: 10-15 MINUTES

Begin by asking if anyone has begun researching college applications or applying for college. Discuss as needed by asking which colleges of interest have been researched and what information was discovered about deadlines and application requirements. Next, ask students to form a loose line facing you for an activity. As you read the following prompts, students should step forward if they have completed or have knowledge of the prompt or stay in place/step back if not. Discuss the importance of each statement as the activity progresses.

If you know your personal social security number, step forward. If not, stay in place.

If you have discussed college(s) of interest with your parents/guardians, step forward. If not, step back.

If you have met with your counselor to make sure you're taking the classes needed for college readiness, step forward.

If you have been working your hardest to get the best grades you can, step forward. If not, stay in place.

If you are involved in more than 2 co-curricular activities, step forward. Take a bonus step if you hold a leadership role.

If you attended (or made plans to attend) a college fair, step forward. If not, stay in place.

If you have researched scholarships and financial aid for college(s) of interest, step forward. If not, step back.

If you have already taken the ACT/SAT at least once, step forward. If not, step back.

If you have visited one of the colleges on your list, step forward. If not, stay in place.

If you have already applied to college, take a BIG step forward. If not, stay in place.

At the conclusion of the activity, tell students that if they are standing in about the same spot, they have a long way to go in the application process. Feel free to add prompts regarding college applications as time allows, or ask participants to provide prompts from their experiences. Instruct the group to return to their seats and distribute *Anatomy of a College Application*.

## STEP TWO TIME: 15 MINUTES

Direct students' attention to the front page of the *Anatomy of a College Application* handout. Read the introduction aloud. Discuss the importance of college selection before applying to colleges and considerations to be made. Next, discuss *The Basics*. Begin with *Stay on Schedule*, **emphasizing the importance of deadlines, tasks to be completed, getting up-to-date information, and applying early.** Discuss *What You'll Need*; students will need to submit more than just the actual application for admission. Ask how they might **ensure that additional items, such as transcripts and test scores, will be delivered to admissions offices** (HS counselors typically send official transcripts, and standardized test scores are sent directly

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### **STEP TWO (CONTINUED)** TIME: 15 MINUTES

from the test company at the request of the student upon registration for the ACT/SAT). Discuss each month's tasks involved with college applications. Be sure to **define terms like legacy (parent or grandparent attended) and concurrent credit (gaining college credit that also counts for high school credit)**.

Discuss the *Take Your Time* section, making certain students understand that extra time and attention is required when completing college applications. Encourage **keeping track of in-process or completed applications by using a tracker or other organizational tool**.

**DreamCatcher Extra:** Provide copies of the Financial Aid Comparison Table and the College Application Tracker Tool included in this Program Guide to assist in deciding on a college and to keep track of the application progress. There is also an interactive version online at [www.dreamcatchercurriculum.com/for-educators](http://www.dreamcatchercurriculum.com/for-educators).

### **STEP THREE** TIME: 10 MINUTES

Move to the inside of the handout to cover the *Timeline for College Applications* portion. Discuss each month with the tasks involved with college applications. Include any additional information pertinent for your geographic area. Remind students to **continuously check email for correspondence from colleges**. Next, instruct the group to get into pairs and complete *Dos and Don'ts for College Apps*. Once pairs are finished, ask each pair to find another pair to compare answers. Provide the answers below once pairs are finished and allow for discussion to accompany each statement:

- DON'T** Apply the day of the application deadline.
- DO** Ask someone to proofread your application before submitting.
- DO** Periodically proofread your work
- DO** Give your high school counselor a list of the colleges to which you've applied
- DON'T** Apply online as well as sending in a paper application
- DON'T** Treat an online application casually by using the same language as texting or emailing
- DO** Print and save a copy of your completed application and confirmation page after you submit the application
- DON'T** Compose your essay/personal statement in the text box within the online application
- DO** Create easy-to-remember usernames, passwords, and PINs and keep them in a safe place
- DON'T** Think that all college applications are basically the same and you can breeze through them easily
- DO** Provide an appropriate email address, not one affiliated with your high school or with an inappropriate username

Discuss the information in the *Applying Early: What to Know* box, ensuring students know **the difference between Early Decision and Early Action**. Next, discuss *The Common App*, and mention any colleges in your area (or colleges that are popular with your students) that participate in the Common Application. Lastly, discuss the *Denied or Wait-Listed* box, including **what recourse is available if wait-listed or denied admission to their college(s) of choice**.

### **LAST STEP & ASSESSMENT** TIME REMAINING

Cover the *Letters of Recommendation* section on the back page, asking students **which individuals they might select to write letters of recommendation and why that individual is a good choice**. Answers should include teachers, coaches, principals, librarians, supervisors, college-prep advisors, employers, etc. Explain why parents/guardians or other family members would not be an appropriate choice. Discuss the *How* and *When to Ask* sections, **covering the aspects of asking in person, following up by email, and providing writers ample time to complete the letter**. Point out the *What Next?* section and discuss the importance of including a student resume to accompany the request. Last, review the *Recommendation Request* and email sample that students can personalize to make their requests to recommendation writers. Encourage everyone to write thank-you notes to their recommenders. End the session by distributing the assessment to a sampling of participants and collect upon completion.

**DreamCatcher Extra:** Conduct this workshop in conjunction with completing college applications with seniors or rising seniors. You could also conduct this workshop with juniors and ask them to research the requirements for their colleges of interest and complete the College Application Tracker Tool, but be sure to point out that requirements can change year-to-year.

### **LEARNING OUTCOME**

At session conclusion, students will be able to arrange a simple college application timeline, identify the key difference between Early Decision and Early Action, and identify one individual to potentially ask for a letter of recommendation.

# COLLEGE APPLICATIONS ASSESSMENT

Arrange this college application timeline using the numbers 1-5:

\_\_\_\_\_ Prepare to take final ACT/SAT Exams    \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and submit your FAFSA    \_\_\_\_\_ Request final transcript to be sent to your college  
\_\_\_\_\_ Submit completed applications to colleges of choice    \_\_\_\_\_ Notify the other colleges that you won't be attending.

Describe the difference between Early Decision and Early Action in the space below:

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Identify one person to ask for a letter of recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_



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# FINANCIAL AID COMPARISON TABLE

Name of Colleges:			
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What is the cost of attendance?			
Tuition and Fees:			
Room and Board:	+	+	+
Books, Supplies, and Transportation Costs:	+	+	+
<b>TOTAL COST OF ATTENDANCE (COA):</b>	=	=	=

What is your financial need?			
Total Cost of Attendance (COA):			
Expected Family Contribution (EFC):	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL NEED:</b>	=	=	=

How will your financial aid be met?			
Federal Pell Grant:			
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant:	+	+	+
Federal Work-Study:	+	+	+
Federal Student Loans (Subsidized and/or Unsubsidized):	+	+	+
State Sponsored Scholarship/Grant Program:	+	+	+
College Scholarships and Grants:	+	+	+
Other Scholarships and Grants:	+	+	+
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL AID OFFER:</b>	=	=	=

<b>What is your out-of-pocket cost? How will you cover the remaining balance?</b> <i>Cost of Attendance – Total Financial Aid Offer =</i>	\$	\$	\$
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# COLLEGE APPLICATION TRACKER TOOL

<b>COLLEGE APP CHECKLIST:</b>	<i>Ex: My Fave University</i>				
<b>Reach, Match, or Safety</b>	✓ Match				
<b>Obtained or accessed application</b>	✓ Online app				
<b>Application deadline</b>	Nov. 1st				
<b>Transcript sent by high school</b>	Requested Oct. 5th				
<b>Sent ACT or SAT scores</b>	April 4th				
<b>Recommendations required? Date requested? Who's writing?</b>	Yes. Due Nov. 30th; asked Mr. Lee Oct. 5th				
<b>Sent thank-you notes to recommenders</b>	Sent Dec. 15th				
<b>Essay required?</b>	Yes				
<b>Asked at least 2 people proofread essay</b>	✓ Yes, asked Ms. Yu and Dr. Ross				
<b>Paid application fee (how much?) or asked for waiver letter</b>	✓ Yes. \$45 pd. w/ application				
<b>Application submission date</b>	Oct. 20th				
<b>Sent vaccination/shot records</b>	Oct. 20th				
<b>Gave school counselor list of colleges to which you applied</b>	✓ Yes, on Nov. 11th				
<b>Confirmed all required materials received by college</b>	✓ Yes, on Dec. 11th				
<b>Accepted?</b>	YES! On Dec. 20th				
<b>Deadline to accept admission &amp; financial offer</b>	May 1st				
<b>Admission accepted &amp; deposit submitted (if applicable)</b>	Will decide on Feb. 15th				
<b>Housing application deadline</b>	Feb. 18th				
<b>Residence Hall selection date</b>	March 1st				
<b>Notify other college(s) you won't be attending</b>	Will notify April 30th if not attending				
<b>Orientation scheduled</b>	June 1st date picked				
<b>Requested final transcript be sent to college</b>	May 1st				
<b>Other:</b>					