



Seattle Lutheran H I G H S C H O O L

College Planning Guide

COLLEGE PLANNING

One of the primary goals of Seattle Lutheran High School is to support and encourage each student's personal and intellectual growth. For many, the culmination of this process is admission to college.

Applying to college is a process. It cannot, nor should it be, done quickly. The process begins freshman year and ends senior year with admission to college. The student must take steps in this process throughout all four years of high school. The following timeline attempts to map out a plan of action for each student. The most important thing to remember is that you cannot complete your college applications in a day, a week or even a month. Plan ahead and do not procrastinate.

Applying to college is a process during which the student finds the right college for him/herself. There is not one universal, absolutely perfect college for everyone. Each student must be realistic and reflect on his/her personal goals and needs in college. Each student's perfect college can be very different from that of his/her peers.

College advising at Seattle Lutheran High School aims to demystify the college application process and, consequently, instill in the student a sense of accomplishment and success. We invite parents and guardians to work with us in preparing students for this exciting time in their lives.

COLLEGE PLANNING – THINGS TO CONSIDER

WHERE SHOULD I APPLY?

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the college application process is deciding where to apply. In the United States there are thousands of universities, colleges and community colleges, both public and private. It is your task to determine what type of school is right for you based on your interests, expectations, abilities and needs.

Before you begin flipping the pages of college view books or meandering through web sites, picture yourself at a college and consider what elements would make your life there the most satisfying. Is class size important to you? Where do you want to live - at home, on-campus or off-campus? After class, what do you like to do for fun? As you answer these questions, you will develop a clearer vision of your ideal college experience and be ready to consider some of the more practical aspects of the decision making process.

One of your first considerations may be the cost. The most selective colleges are also the most expensive. However, it is important to realize that there is a wide range of financial aid options, and your goal is to find a college where you will receive the education you desire.

As you imagine your perfect college, begin by deciding which factors are most important to you. An example of this process could concern the size of university. Do you want to attend a large school (in the range of 15,000 or more students), a medium school (4,000-12,000 students) or a small school (less than 4,000 students)? Aided by college profile books, free Internet resources and your counselor, you may feel less overwhelmed, and confused about making these preliminary decisions. After compiling a list of colleges that interest you, make an appointment to speak with your counselor. He/she will review your list of colleges and offer advice to help you with your choice of colleges. Once you have narrowed your search, it is time to begin requesting applications and view books from those colleges.

CRITERIA TO CONSIDER

Community College or University

There are excellent opportunities in both the community college and university institutions.

Community College

Community colleges have an open admission policy. They accept any applicant who is a high school graduate. Tuition usually averages \$3500 to \$4000 per year. Course offerings allow students to enroll in day or evening classes. Generally the difference between community colleges and universities is that community colleges award Associate degrees upon completion of programs. However, many community colleges now offer some Bachelor degrees as well.

A student who has received an Associate degree at one of the state's community colleges can transfer into a public, four-year university with junior standing. This allows a student to reduce the overall cost of education.

Universities

Publicly funded, four-year, state universities are fully accredited institutions that award Bachelor degrees to students who have successfully completed the core curriculum requirements and fulfilled the major requirements for a specific academic subject.

For state residents, the cost of tuition and room/board averages approximately \$28,000 per year at Washington state universities. The cost of tuition, room and board for non-residents at another state's public university may average \$40,000 to \$55,000 per year.

Private universities, which receive most of their funding from non-governmental sources, offer an academic experience comparable to public universities. Some reasons students choose to attend private schools include: academic reputation, religious affiliation or size. The cost of tuition, room and board can range from \$30,000 to \$65,000 per year; however most private colleges have financial aid offices that are capable of meeting some of the financial needs of their students.

Academic Atmosphere

What kind of atmosphere is best for you—challenging, intense, relaxed, supportive? Some colleges, especially smaller to medium sized liberal arts colleges, have a reputation for the quality of the education they offer, which often combines a difficult core curriculum with outstanding academic departments.

Academic Programs

Are you interested in pursuing a specialized professional education or a broad liberal arts education? Must students choose a major to be admitted? Are there opportunities to participate in ROTC, study abroad programs, or for freshmen to enroll in honors seminars?

Social Atmosphere

Are you seeking a residential or a commuter college? A small, close-knit community where the college is the center of the community or a large, diverse university? Politically active or unconcerned with politics? A strong Greek (fraternity/sorority) system? A party or academic atmosphere? The social culture of the college reflects the interests of the students. Consider the demographics of the college: With whom will you be attending classes? Single sex or coed? Diverse or homogenous? Are you seeking the support of an ethnic, regional or national population?

Housing

Do you want to live on-campus, off-campus or at home? Is housing guaranteed for four years if you decide you want to live on-campus? Is off-campus housing necessary, even if you want to live on-campus? If you want to or must live off-campus, how available and affordable is it? Is there an active campus-housing agency that will help you find off-campus housing?

Cost

Is cost a major factor? Are you and/or is your family willing to take out loans to support the cost of your education? Remember; do not automatically exclude the possibility of attending a private college due to cost because you may qualify for financial aid and/or scholarships.

Athletics/Co-Curricular Activities

Are intercollegiate athletics important to you? Is it important for you to attend a Division I college? Are athletic scholarships offered? Will you be able to play? How much? Are intramural sports important? When considering your ability to become involved in an intercollegiate athletic program, especially if you might like to pursue the possibility of being recruited, it is important that you see your counselor, your coach and the athletic director.

Are you interested in continuing any of your high school co-curricular activities while at college? What are the chances to get involved in your favorite organization? Is it important that there are good opportunities in drama, journalism, debate, radio, TV, politics, ethnic culture clubs, etc.? Many college representatives are happy to discuss on campus student organizations and their purpose or mission as a student group.

Geographic Location

Do you want to stay in Washington or go to school elsewhere? How important is it to be close to a particular environment—the ocean, skiing, large cities? Does climate matter—warm, cold, rain? Is college a time to explore and travel or to stay near home? Once you arrive at college, what will you do and where will you go with your new friends? Do you want the surrounding community to be a small town, metropolitan area, or a suburban city? Should the setting of the college be culturally stimulating, diverse, serene?

Freshman Year

- Pay attention to your grades. Your grades freshman year are very important. Acquiring solid study skills will be valuable throughout your academic life.
- Co-curricular experiences broaden your perspective of the world and develop values. They are also a great way to make friends! College admission decisions and scholarships often depend heavily upon your involvement in school, sports and volunteer work in your church or community. Join an athletic team, a club or an organization, and perform community service.
- Do a few activities that you really enjoy. Doing a few activities well is much better than doing many poorly.
- Complete the *My Personality Type* survey in Naviance; investigate some of the career options that match.
- Freshmen visit Seattle Pacific University for a tour, lunch and presentation by an admission officer who talks about the importance of choosing the right classes and activities now. Students are encouraged to start thinking about what they may want to study and what type of school they might want to attend. They are encouraged to visit schools.

Sophomore Year

- Keep your grades up and improve your study skills! Take the most challenging courses available to you. Consider Honors courses.
- Continue with your co-curricular involvement. Seek leadership positions in organizations, teams and clubs.
- During our testing day in October, you will take a practice ACT test.
- Attend the National College Fair held annually in the fall at the Seattle Convention Center.
- Investigate information on colleges and careers in your account in the Naviance Network.
- Sophomores visit Pacific Lutheran University for a tour, lunch and presentation by an admissions officer who talks about comparing schools, looking for schools that match their interests, as well as what students should be doing now to prepare for college (course selection, activities, etc.)

Junior Year (It is very important!)

Fall Remember that the transcripts you will be sending to colleges will include your grades through junior year. Your transcript is an essential part of your application. A strong GPA is very important.

- You will be taking the PSAT in October. The PSAT is a practice test for the SAT Reasoning Test. The PSAT that is taken in junior year is also used to determine eligibility for National Merit scholarships. It is also a good indicator of how you will do on the SAT test.
- Attend the Seattle Lutheran College Night in September with your parents/guardians. Four college representatives are present and College Information Packets are distributed.
- Attend the National College Fair, held annually at the Seattle Convention Center in October.
- Plan to attend additional college representative visits during the school day at SLHS arranged by SLHS. Dates and times are posted on the College Board and included in daily announcements.

Winter

- Register to take the SAT Reasoning Test and/or the ACT in winter or spring. You

will register online for both tests. The SAT Reasoning Test/SAT Subject Tests website is: www.collegeboard.org and the ACT website is: www.act.org. You should register early so you are able to take it at the most convenient location for you. REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE SEATTLE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL CODE (481167) WHEN YOU REGISTER SO SCORES WILL BE SENT TO US. Then we may include them with your transcripts. (That means you will not have to pay for additional test scores.) If you are considering the University of Washington, be sure to request that your scores are sent there as they only accept them electronically from ETS.

- If you are fairly certain that you will apply to colleges that require SAT Subject Tests, plan on registering to take these in late spring.
- Keep your grades as high possible!
- When registering for senior year courses, consider exceeding the requirements for the college(s) that you wish to attend. For example, a university may only require that you have two years of international language but the admission committee may not look favorably on your application unless you have more than the minimum. Colleges are acutely aware of the “easy” courses available to students who are looking for a comfortable senior year. Impress the schools you are applying to by challenging yourself.

Spring

- Take the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests and/or the ACT. Plan to take the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT at least twice. Some colleges accept the highest scores from each test (super score), but others will only take the scores from a single test.
- Begin focusing on what type of school you want to attend. Consider the following factors: degree program (2 years or 4 years), public or private, location, size, cost, curriculum, campus life, religious affiliation, sports program, study abroad, special programs, etc. Choose one or several of these factors that are clearly the most important to you and begin to screen universities according to your criteria. If, after a thorough search, it becomes clear that you really want to attend a particular school, you should consider applying early next fall to that college.
- Juniors visit Western Washington University for a tour, lunch, and a presentation by an admissions officer who talks about the application process as well as choosing a college that matches their interests/needs. On the bus trip, each junior is interviewed about where they are in their college search, what schools they are considering, what their interests are. He may suggest some additional schools to research.
- In the spring, start visiting colleges’ web sites. Be sure to utilize Naviance Network resources.

- If you believe you are a recruitable athlete, ask your coach, athletic director and your counselor for guidance in the recruiting process. You may want to send a letter of introduction to coaches at the colleges that interest you. The athletic recruiting process can be complicated and sometimes disappointing for athletes. There are definite NCAA Clearinghouse guidelines that must be observed. The student-athlete who is being recruited by a Division I or II college must complete a registration with the NCAA Eligibility Center online <https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>. This should be completed after junior year.
- Ask two teachers if they will write letters of recommendation for you. The letters are not required until the application process, but it is good to have these conversations with your teachers early. Be sure to thank them, in advance, for their efforts!
- There are many different opportunities for summer college experiences. This is an excellent way to experience college and to demonstrate your interest to the college. There are many different camps, both academic and athletic, held on college campuses all over the country. It is to your advantage to avail yourself of as many of these opportunities as possible. Make an appointment with the college counselor to learn more about available opportunities.
- Try to visit as many of the college campuses that you are interested in as possible during this summer.

Senior Year (Don't Procrastinate!!!)

- Your acceptance to colleges may be dependent upon your first semester grades, many private colleges require a mid-year transcript after first semester grades have been posted, so do not develop an early and incurable case of senioritis!
- You should know what you are looking for in a college by now and should have narrowed your list to 10-15 prospective colleges. You may want to apply to only 4-6 schools, or to as many as 8-10. Application fees average \$60 per college so this can be costly if you are applying to a large number of colleges. You should also consider the cost of submitting test scores from the testing companies to the colleges if we don't have the scores.
- Your list of schools should include at least one or two "*safety*" colleges—colleges that you would be happy to attend, that you know will accept you and that you know your family will be able to afford. We usually recommend applying to 2-3 "*reach*" or "*dream*" schools, and 2-3 "*competitive*" schools, where you think you have a good chance of acceptance and would like to attend.

September-October

- If you are applying early decision or early action to any colleges, you must begin working on your applications right away. Early Decision, Single Choice Early Action and Early Action deadlines are in early November which means that you should aim to have your application completed by mid-October!
- There are several different ways to complete your applications online. The college's specific application form is usually available from their website. You can either complete the form online or download a copy to complete as a paper application. *Most schools now prefer online applications.* You should investigate the options available for each college. Be sure to make copies of each completed application in case your application should somehow be lost. This applies whether doing them online or on paper.
- More than 500 colleges and universities, especially private schools and some state universities, now use the Common Application. You may complete the application once and submit it to multiple schools. However, you need to **print out the School Report form** and give it to Miss Vradenburgh to send with your transcript and recommendation. Also, **print the Teacher Recommendation form** to give to each teacher that you ask to write a recommendation. Be sure to check whether schools you are applying to also require their own **Supplement** in addition to the Common Application.
- Take the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests and/or ACT again if you want to try to raise your scores. Some universities accept SAT and ACT scores from seniors through the December testing dates.
- You must have your standardized test scores sent by the testing company to each college to which you are applying. **Seattle Lutheran cannot put test scores on your transcript unless we receive them. You must include our school code (481167) when you register for each test.** This saves you money and can speed up your application process.
- Write your personal essays and give them to an English teacher for proofreading and critiquing. Since you are not able to physically present yourself to the admissions committee, these statements are the only way to personalize your application and to offer the committee a sense of who you are. Therefore, these essays must be as close to perfect as possible!
- Make an appointment with **Shirley Vradenburgh**, the College Counselor to talk about your applications. If needed, ask for help when doing your applications. It is really important to carefully **proofread** your applications.
- Compile your co-curricular activities, community service, employment, honors, awards and special skills from your freshman year through your senior year into the Activity Record Sheet. You can use this information to create a resume for your applications and to admission representatives who are interviewing you.

- Be aware of all of your application deadlines. Washington State 4-year schools begin accepting applications for admission on October 1st.

November-December

- If you are still undecided where to apply, attend the National College Fair again and talk with your counselor and parents.
- You must submit all application materials by December 1st. This is often the priority deadline for admissions, scholarships, and even housing.
- Make sure that all applications are completed well before the deadlines. Missing deadlines will affect your application! Every year the University of Washington, in addition to many other universities in the nation, receives a greater number of applications than the year before, but their class size remains the same. This means that colleges have more students applying than they can accept and are forced to consider only applications they receive on time. You do not want to lose your chance to attend the college of your dreams!
- Ask your parents to attend the SLHS College Financial Aid Night on December 1st. They will receive information from a College Financial Aid Office about completing the FAFSA, various types of financial aid available, including scholarships, grants (federal, state, and school), various types of loans (subsidized and unsubsidized), work study, etc.

January-February-March

- You should be considering how you will pay for your college education. Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form and submit it as soon after January 1 as possible. Be sure to indicate every college you applied to on this form. The FAFSA should be completed online.
- Some private colleges require the CSS PROFILE form in addition to the FAFSA. You may complete this form online, beginning September 15th.
- Watch financial aid deadlines as they vary from school to school. It is imperative that these forms are submitted on time so the financial aid office at the colleges you are applying to may formulate your aid package. If this data is late, the college may not have sufficient funds to fully meet your needs. *Most deadlines are February 15th or earlier.*
- You should have completed all college applications. Colleges with Rolling Admissions act on students' applications as soon as they are received. Therefore, the earlier you apply the greater the potential for admission.
- A midyear transcript will be sent to colleges to which the student has applied, if the colleges request them. These transcripts are sent as soon as the 7th semester (1st semester senior year) transcript is available. In addition to your most recent

grades, notify schools of new honors or awards that you have received.

- Look for scholarship opportunities available to you. You can learn of scholarship opportunities in Family Connection, in the counseling office and over the Internet through all of the **free** scholarship search services. A word of warning: be cautious of any company that offers to find scholarships for you for a fee. Never pay for a scholarship search. They rarely discover anything that you cannot find yourself. There are many free scholarship search websites available. Especially consider: www.thewashboard.org (matches Washington state students with Washington scholarship providers), www.fastweb.com, and www.findtuition.com. Also be sure to check individual college web sites as they often have a variety of scholarships – academic, athletic and talent or activities such as music, drama, robotics, etc.

April-May-June

- Decide what school you will attend. Some of your choices will accept you, while others may not. This does not mean that you are unworthy to attend those schools and it is not an insult. You will most likely find in the fall that where you ultimately decide to go is the best choice for you!
- Reply by May 1st, with a check or money order for your deposit. As with all of the deadlines and due dates in the college application process, this deadline is extremely important: if a college has not heard back from you by May 1, they will assume that you are not interested in attending their school and they will give your spot to someone else!
- If you were wait-listed at a school, be sure to reply and inform the admissions committee that you still want to attend their school by writing a letter expressing your desire. You should still accept the offer of admission at another college and mail in your deposit because it may turn out that the college where you were wait-listed will not be able to accept you.

MORE INFORMATION

- For more information on college planning, the application process, admission requirements and costs, please contact **Shirley Vradenburgh**, Seattle Lutheran High School's College Counselor.