Fisher Catholic

College Application Handbook

Class of 2012

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A Note to Students and Parents

The college application process can seem completely overwhelming at times. The process has changed so much even within the last 10 years: application deadlines are pushed ahead, everything is done online, and admission sometimes seems as if it is more competitive than ever. This handbook should help guide you through the process as smoothly as possible. Here are some key points for you to remember:

STUDENTS

You are the one in the driver's seat. Though you will get input from parents, faculty, friends, relatives and admission officers, remember that the person going to the college in the end is you. Make decisions that feel good and make sense to you.

Pay attention to deadlines. College application deadlines are not flexible. It is your responsibility to keep track of them and meet them.

Keep an open mind. Do not dismiss a college just because you have never heard of it. Do not jump to conclusions based on someone who loves or hates the school, or by how highly a school is ranked.

Do your research. Use all the resources available to gather information and impressions and process the information wisely before making definitive choices. Make a college application binder or folder and keep all of your information in it.

Remember that being admitted or denied to a college is not a reflection of you personally. Admission officers admit and deny pieces of paper, not applicants.

Focus on your needs. This is not a competition between you and your friends. What may be appropriate for your friends may not be right for you and vice versa. Keep a focus on what this process is all about: finding the right match for you.

Visit colleges and pay attention to your gut instincts and feelings. There is no formula for finding the right school. Often it comes down to the right feeling or chemistry with a school.

Initiate conversations about the process with your parents. The more you share with them on your own terms, the more they will feel included in the process and the less they will nag you about it.

Be patient. A lot of the application process is a waiting game. You must wait for them to receive your transcripts, wait to receive an admissions decision, and wait to receive your financial aid package. We live in a world where everyone is used to have instant results for everything, and it's very important to remember that there is nothing instant when it comes to applying to college!

PARENTS

Your child should take the main responsibility for the college process. It is very tempting to fill out applications for them, contact teachers for recommendation letters on their behalf, and contact the colleges on their behalf. One of the major complaints that I hear from admissions representatives is students not taking responsibility for their applications. Colleges want to see that students are able to handle the paperwork and get questions answered on their own. Someone else – a parent or a counselor – doing all of the work for them reflects poorly on the student, and admission counselors do take note of that. Be sure that your child is the one filling out forms, calling the admissions office with questions, and asking teachers for letters of recommendation. The one thing that will be better for you to fill out than the student is the FAFSA because of all the tax information needed.

Please feel free to contact me through e-mail at jkirby@cdeducation.org or call me at 740-654-1231 x23 if you have any questions along the way.

Jamie Kirby
School Counselor

Recommended Resources

These resources are available for students to check out from the guidance office:

College Match: A Blueprint for Choosing the Best School for You by Steven R. Antonoff

Do-It Write: How to Prepare a Great College Application by G. Gary Ripple

College Majors That Work: A Step-by-Step Guide to Choosing and Using Your College Major by Michael P. Viollt

Behind The Scenes: An Inside Look At the Selective College Admission Process by Edward B. Wall

The Winning Edge: The Student-Athlete's Guide To College Sports by Frances & James Killpatrick

Great Colleges for the Real World by Michael P. Viollt

Campus Pursuit: Making the Most of Your Visit and Interview by G. Gary Ripple

College.edu: Online Resources for the Cyber-Savvy Student by Lisa Guernsey

Campus Daze: Easing the Transition From High School to College by George Gibbs

The College Finder: Choosing the School That's Right For You by Steven R. Antonoff

Cool Colleges: For the Hyper-Intelligent, Self-Directed, Late Blooming, and Just Plain Different by Donald Asher

Other Recommended Resources:

The Fiske Guide to Colleges by Edward Fiske

Colleges That Change Lives: http://www.ctcl.org/
(also a book by Loren Pope)

College Confidential: http://www.collegeconfidential.com/

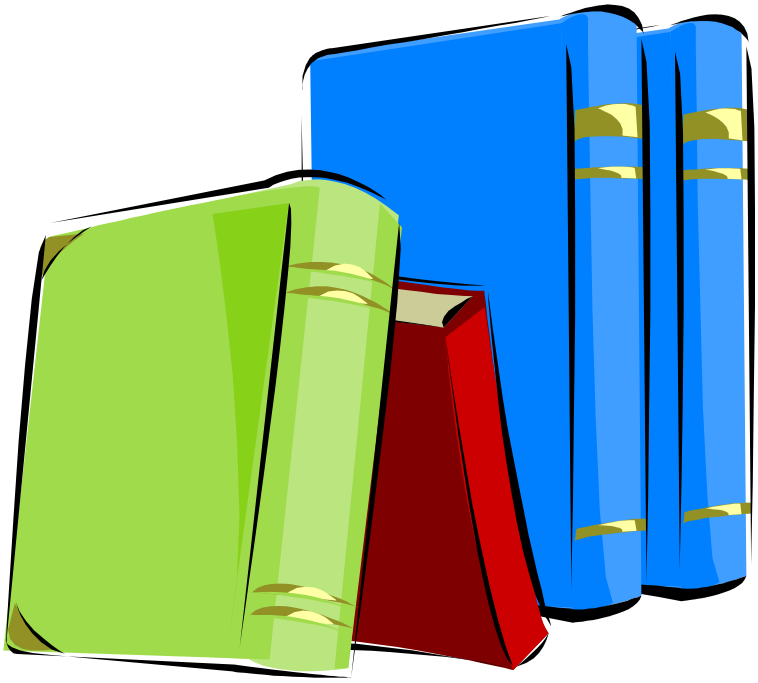
College Week Live: http://www.collegeweeklive.com/

Petersons: http://www.petersons.com/

The College Board: http://www.collegeboard.org/

FastWeb Scholarship Search: http://www.fastweb.com/

College Prowler: http://collegeprowler.com/



How do colleges select their students?

Open Enrollment
Open enrollment schools are open to all students who have graduated from high school. All a student needs to do to be accepted to an open enrollment college is fill out an application. Examples of open enrollment schools are OUL, Columbus State, Shawnee State, and the OSU branch campuses.

Selective Schools
Selective schools do not admit everyone. There are various levels of selectivity ranging from slightly selective, where students just have to have met minimum academic requirements, to highly selective, where many perfectly qualified students are not accepted each year. Here are some factors besides GPA and test scores that medium to highly selective schools take into account:

Holistic Review: Selective schools look at students and their incoming class as a whole. This is especially true of very highly selective schools. A student's GPA or test scores will not stand alone. Schools have an idea of the freshman class that they want to admit and then look for characteristics within that class. For example, they may want a student from a certain state, or a student who plays the cello, or a student who has taken part in mission trips. There is no way to define what those things are each year – this is the unknown factor of highly selective colleges. An admissions officer from an Ivy League school said once that they could take their entire admitted class, deny them all admission, and admit a whole new class from their applicants who were originally denied and the quality of the class would still be the same.

Curriculum*:* Colleges will look at the quality of the curriculum that you chose to take compared to what we offer. They would like to see that you took the most difficult curriculum available that you would be successful at. This means that if you are an honors student you took most of the honors classes that we offer.

Discipline: Discipline records are not on your transcripts, so demerits and conduct grades are not sent to colleges. Some schools ask about suspensions and some do not. If you have been suspended once, it is not necessarily going to hurt you. You will need to write a statement about what happened and what you have learned from it, and as long as you are remorseful and have learned something from it you will probably be fine. Multiple suspensions, however, might be a bigger issue. I do not disclose suspensions in recommendations unless a school specifically asks me; if they ask though I must tell the truth.

Extracurriculars*:* Colleges want to see quality, not quantity. In general, they would rather you are passionate about something, involving a lot of time, dedication, and leadership roles, than to see a list of clubs that you were a member of but were not very involved in.

College Application Timeline

Junior Year

April/May

- Take the ACT
- Take the SAT
- Explore colleges online
- Visit colleges

June

- Take the ACT
- Take the SAT
- Explore colleges online
- Visit colleges

Summer

- Explore colleges online
- Make a list of schools that you are interested in visiting and possibly applying to
- Visit the schools you are interested in.
- Register for the September ACT if you are planning to take it. The registration deadline is in early August – before we are back in school!

Senior Year

First Day of School

- By the first day of school you should be able to tell me 3-5 schools that you will probably apply to. This does not have to be a final list, but it is at least a start!

All Year

- Check the bulletin board outside the guidance office for upcoming college visits and scholarship information
- Fill out scholarship applications
- Bring a copy of your scholarship letters to the guidance office
- Keep up your grades – colleges look at your senior year schedule and grades!

September/October

- Re-take the SAT or ACT if you want to try for a higher score
- Attend college visits at Fisher
- Attend the OUL college fair
- Visit colleges
- Fill out college applications, including transcript requests and ACT/SAT score requests

November

- Have college applications turned in by Thanksgiving. See college application procedure for details

December

- Re-take the SAT or ACT if you want to try for a higher score – last chance!

January

- Make sure your family's taxes are finished ASAP so you can complete the FAFSA
- Check on your schools' priority FAFSA filing dates

February

- File the FAFSA (many priority dates are February 1st or February 15th – check your schools to be sure)

March/April

- Compare the colleges you were accepted to – academics, your financial aid package, whether you think it is a good fit for you, etc.
- Visit each school again if you are undecided. Try to attend a class or schedule an overnight visit if possible.

May

- May 1 - national deadline for deciding which school you are attending. You will have to submit a deposit by this date.
- Send thank you notes to teachers who wrote letters of recommendation for you.
- Send a letter to colleges that you were accepted to but will not be attending. Thank them for admitting you and tell them that you have decided not to attend.

June

- Graduation!
- Your final transcript will be sent to the college you will be attending the week after graduation.

College Visits at Fisher

Every fall we have college representatives visit Fisher to give presentations to students interested in their school. Students can sign up for visits on the bulletin board outside the guidance office. Please keep the following in mind when signing up to attend visits:

- Each visit will be limited to 25 students. When groups are larger than 25 it is not effective for either the students or the admissions representative.
- Each student is limited to 6 college presentations. If you sign up but do not attend a presentation it still counts as one of your 6.
- Do not sign up for a college presentation unless you are serious about attending it. Admissions representatives need to have an accurate count of who will be attending, and it is very frustrating to them when 25 students sign up but only a couple actually come to the presentation.
- Only sign up for college presentations that you truly want to learn more about. Remember that you are taking one of 25 slots, so if you are attending a presentation of a school you aren't really interested in, you are taking a spot from someone who might have really wanted that information.

College visits at Fisher usually give very general information about the college and put you on their mailing list. If you have already visited the campus or attended an information session about the school you probably already have all of the information that they will present. They are best for schools that you are curious about or would like more information about before visiting. College visits at Fisher should not take the place of actually visiting a campus.

If you are unable to attend a presentation (you cannot miss class or the sign-up list is full), but you still want information on the school, you can pick up information in the guidance office after the visit.

College Fairs

College Fairs can be a good place to gather information from many different colleges at once. The big college fair in the area is at OUL in mid-September.

Regional Information Sessions

Many top-tier schools do not visit individual high schools. Instead they opt to have regional information sessions. For example, this spring there will be a joint information session from Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, Penn, and Stanford in downtown Columbus. Notre Dame usually does an information session in the fall at a church in Columbus. Information about upcoming regional sessions will be posted on the bulletin board outside the guidance office.

College Campus Visits

You should make every effort to visit the campus of colleges that you are interested in. Visiting the school will give you a good sense of the atmosphere, the students, and the location that cannot be seen through the website or brochure.

To set up a college visit:

- Know what you are interested in doing. Do you want to take a tour? Sit in on a class? Stay overnight in a dorm? Eat in the dining hall? Meet with an admissions counselor? Meet with a coach? Meet with the financial aid office? All of those are possible, you just need to make sure you ask for everything you want to do.
- Call the admissions office of the school (you will find the phone number on their website).
- Let them know you are a high school student and would like to schedule a visit. Tell them what you would like to do during your visit.
- They will schedule everything for you.

After the visit:

- Take notes on what you liked and didn't like – use something like the campus visit scorecard available from College Board: http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/collegesearch/campus_visit_score_card.pdf
- Keep your notes about various colleges together. After awhile it will be hard to remember the differences between schools so it is good to have your notes to refer to.

SAT or ACT?

Many students wonder which test is best to take. It used to be that the SAT was for east and west coast schools and the ACT was for schools in the Midwest. This is not true anymore – all schools will accept both tests. They are very different tests, so you should take both at least once and see which one suits you better.

SAT
The SAT measures your critical thinking skills. If you are a good test taker or are someone who likes solving problems and figuring things out, you will probably like the SAT.

ACT
The ACT measures content knowledge. If you are not necessarily a good problem solver but do know facts and subject content, you will probably like the ACT.

Different people have different testing skills, so don't take a friend's word for which test is harder – it may be the one that you do better on! Take both at least once. Decide which one you liked better and re-take that one if you want to try for higher scores.

You can choose which scores you want to send to colleges. Colleges will take the score from the test you did best on.

ACT Writing

The ACT writing section is fairly new. Currently, most schools in Ohio require that you take it at least once and are using the results for helpful but not harmful admissions decisions. In other words, the writing test score could be the factor that gets you admitted to a school, but they will not use the writing score as the sole reason for denying you admission. Some schools are using it for your freshman English placement. Sign up for the writing portion of the test at least once.

More selective schools are using the writing test in admission as equally as all other test scores so if you are applying to those schools you should take writing each time you test.

SAT II (Subject Tests)

The College Board offers SAT II Subject Tests in a variety of subjects. Some colleges require these for admission or for specific majors. Check with the colleges you are considering to find out if they need SAT Subject Tests. Most schools in Ohio do not require them.

College Application Procedure

1) Parent must sign and submit a transcript release form (available on page 27) to the guidance office. One form covers all college and scholarship applications.

2) The student fills out the application, either online or paper. You are responsible for making sure that your section of the application is complete, ACT/SAT scores are sent, the application fee is paid, and the counselor page (if needed) is given to Mrs. Kirby.

3) If doing an online application, the student must make sure it is submitted. If doing a paper application, the application along with the application fee can be brought to the guidance office to be mailed.

4) If letters of recommendation are needed, ask teachers at least 10 school days before they are due. More time is always better if possible. Teachers will send their letters on their own, not through the guidance office.

5) Student must request a transcript by submitting a yellow transcript request form at least 10 school days before the application deadline. Requests submitted less than 10 days before the deadline cannot be guaranteed to arrive on time. Remember to bring me any counselor forms or other paperwork that needs to be submitted.

6) Complete your college applications by Thanksgiving. That will ensure that you meet priority dates for scholarships. Most schools start making admission decisions on December 1st.

7) When you receive a scholarship, bring your letter to the guidance office. We will not put the scholarship in the graduation program if I haven't seen the letter! Colleges do not send copies of scholarship letters to the school, so the only way I will know you have one is for you to bring it in.

8) May 1st – National deadline for deciding which school you are attending. Your deposit to the school holding your place is due.

9) After the May 1st deadline I will come to your theology classes and have you fill out a survey to tell me where you will be attending college next year. That is where I will send your final transcript.

10) Send thank you notes to teachers who write you letters of recommendation.

11) Send letters to the schools that you are not attending. Thank them for admitting you and let them know you will not be attending.

Note: Please don't bring me pieces of an application to "hold on to" – if I'm holding on to pieces of applications for 60 people there's a chance things will get mixed up or not sent when they're supposed to! Only bring counselor forms, applications, essays, etc. to send once you have everything together.

Common Application

The Common Application (http://www.commonapp.org) allows students to fill out one application and apply to any of the 414 colleges who are members of the organization.

Tips for the Common Application:

1) Adding a school to your common application list does not automatically submit your application to them. You must click submit at the end of the application for each school.
2) Some schools have supplements to the Common Application. If you add a college to your list that has a supplement it will automatically take you through the supplement form before you submit it.
3) There is a place on the common application that asks for your counselor's e-mail address. Please provide that (jkirby@cdeducation.org) and it will automatically e-mail me a link to upload your transcript and recommendation when you submit your first application. Once I have done that, they will automatically be attached to all of your Common Applications as you submit them.

How to Request Transcripts

1) Fill out a yellow transcript request form and submit it to the guidance office.
2) All transcript requests must be submitted at least 10 school days before the deadline.

How to Request ACT/SAT Scores

Beginning this year, Fisher Catholic will no longer be providing ACT and SAT scores on high school transcripts. There are two reasons for this:

Colleges aren't accepting them. Most colleges are moving towards requiring that test scores come directly from the testing agency, so they won't accept test scores on transcripts.

Score Choice policies. Both ACT and the College Board (SAT) have score choice policies which means that students can choose which scores to send or not send to colleges. The test scores provided to schools for their permanent files are stickers, so there is no way to for us to include some scores but not others.

In light of these policies, students must have their official test scores send directly from ACT or College Board.

1) You can choose a college as one of the 4 free schools that will receive your score report when you register to test.
2) If you did not have a school listed when you registered to test, you will need to log into your student account at ACT (www.actstudent.org) or College Board (www.collegeboard.com).
3) Click on "send my scores" and enter the colleges that you want your score report sent to. There is a fee of $10-12 per school.

If you need unofficial copies of your scores for scholarship purposes you can print out your score report from your student account.

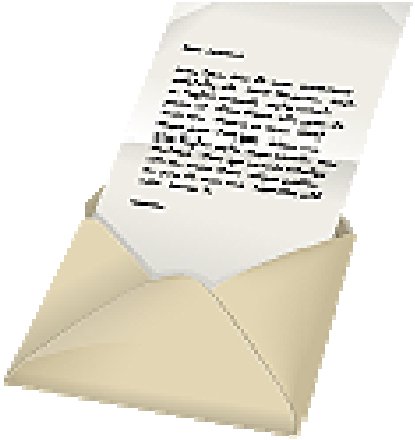
We will still keep student's scores on file, but they will not be part of the official transcript and will not be released to colleges or scholarships.

Letter of Recommendation Procedure

1) Ask teachers to write you a letter at least 10 days before the deadline. More time is always better if possible. Some teachers might have a survey or other paperwork they need you to complete. Be sure you fill that out completely.

2) It is the teacher's responsibility to mail your letter to the college on time. The guidance office does not handle letters of recommendation from teachers. Your transcript and counselor forms will be mailed separately.

3) If a scholarship (such as the Fairfield County Foundation) requires a letter of recommendation and wants all information sent together, the teacher can either give the letter to the student or the guidance office.



What To Do If Colleges Are Missing Something

Remember that colleges are receiving thousands of applications and transcripts a week. At some big schools like OSU and OU, they may be receiving close to a thousand transcripts in one day, especially in the days around deadlines.

They physically cannot process the mail that fast. There are times that schools are one month or more behind in their mail – on December 1st they are opening mail that they received on November 1st. In the meantime, the letters saying “we don’t have your transcript” are being sent out. Your transcript is there, but it has not been opened yet or it has not been matched up with your application yet.

Admissions directors specifically ask high school counselors to not re-send transcripts that have already been sent, because all that does is slow down the system even more.

If you receive a letter stating they don’t have your transcript, or your application status online says incomplete, and it has been less than 10 weeks since you requested the transcript, you need to wait. If it has been longer than 10 weeks, I will re-send it.

FAFSA

The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is required by colleges to give you need-based financial aid. File the FAFSA even if you believe you will not qualify for anything, because some schools require it for all financial aid. Additionally, there are loans that are available to anyone who files the FAFSA that are not dependent on need.

The FAFSA must be filed online at **www.fafsa.gov** (do not go to fafsa.com – it is a site that wants you to pay to fill it out). Paper FAFSAs are no longer accepted.

The FAFSA can be filed **after January 1, 2012**. It is best to have your taxes done first, because you will need that information to complete it. You can fill it out with estimated information but will have to go back and update it once your taxes are complete so it is easier to just do it once. Many schools have priority FAFSA filing deadlines in February, so check with each of your colleges and make sure you meet their deadline for the maximum consideration for awards.

Parent information is required on the FAFSA, even if you are not planning to pay for college for your child. There are a few exceptions (student is married, over 25, left home because of abuse, or has a legal guardian other than the parent), but unwillingness to pay is not one of them.

The FAFSA will give you an Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) number. This is the amount of money that the government believes your family is able to contribute to your college expenses. **Your EFC does not change, but your financial need does depending on the college.**

For example:

You have an EFC of $10,000. A state school might cost $18,000, leaving you with a financial need of $8,000. A private school might cost $40,000, leaving you with a financial need of $30,000.

Colleges try to meet your need with a combination of grants, loans, and work-study. The proportions of each will be different with each school. You can then accept or decline from what they offer you.

Special Circumstances

If you have special circumstances that are not evident on the FAFSA – for example, large medical bills or loss of a job – financial aid offices at colleges have the ability to make a “professional judgment” and change your EFC. The change is only in effect for that specific college. If you have a circumstance that you believe would qualify for a professional judgment, contact the financial aid office at each of the colleges that you are considering and ask for your case to be reviewed. They are not required to change your EFC, but they can, so it is worth asking.

Scholarship Applications

Most large scholarships that students receive come from the colleges that they applied to, so that should be the main focus of your scholarship search. Private colleges tend to give a lot more scholarship money than state schools. Many times private schools will give enough money to make the cost comparable to a state school.

Your next source of scholarships will be local and national scholarships. These arrive periodically in the guidance office, usually beginning in late September and ending in early May.

A list of available scholarships will be posted on the bulletin board outside the guidance office. It will be updated at least once a month, but more often during the peak application season (January-March). Copies of the scholarship list are available in the bins next to the bulletin board. Students are welcome to take a copy of the list.

Copies of applications are in folders in the guidance office, sorted by due date. Students may come in and take applications anytime.

Students can either mail the applications on their own or bring them to the guidance office to be mailed, whichever you prefer. If there is not enough time to mail the applications and they will need to be hand-delivered, the student will be responsible for delivering them.

Scholarship Awards

Colleges and scholarship committees do not send copies of their award letters to the school, so the only way I will know you received a scholarship is if you bring me a copy of your award letter. We want to acknowledge all of our scholarship recipients at graduation, so please bring your letters into the guidance office as you receive them. Please bring copies of all scholarships you receive, not just the school that you will be attending, because we will list them all in the program.

Final Transcript

In early May, Mrs. Kirby will come to all of the senior theology classes so that you can fill out a survey with the school you will be attending. Your final transcript will be sent to the school that you list by the Friday after graduation. You will not need to make a separate request for that transcript unless you change your mind about the school you are attending.

Senior Student Survey

Name:_____

This survey will help me when writing letters of recommendation and filling out counselor information forms for your college applications. The more detailed you are, the better your recommendation letter will be! Fill this out and submit it to the guidance office.

1. List the school activities you have participated in, the number of years, and the amount of time per week you spent. If you are currently a junior, indicate whether you plan to participate senior year. Also, list what you have gained or learned from each activity. Consider artistic, athletic, literary, community service, and leadership positions.

2. Which activity was most important to you? Why?

3. What do you consider your most important activities outside of school? List jobs (paid or volunteer), religious activities, hobbies, travel, music, art, and drama. Include the number of years of your involvement and the amount of time you spent on the activity weekly, and explain why this activity was significant to you.

4. In or out of school, which awards and honors have you received? Which elected offices have you held?

5. What book(s) have had the greatest impact on you? Why?

6. Describe the academic accomplishment (major paper, science experiement, artistic project, etc) you are most proud of, and tell why you take pride in it.

7. What kind of learner are you? Which academic setting or assignments make you thrive? What interests you?

8. List your three most distinguishing or admirable qualities. Explain each in several sentences.

9. What do you hope to accomplish in college and after? Consider your career goals and your broader goals.

Senior Parent Survey

Student name:_____

This survey will help me when writing letters of recommendation and filling out counselor information forms for your child's college applications.

1. How do you view your child's academic progress?

2. What do you believe your child's strengths are?
a. Academic strengths:

b. Other strengths:

3. What would you like colleges to know about your son or daughter that might not be shown by his or her grades or list of activities?

4. What experiences have shaped your child's personality?

5. What makes your son or daughter special?

6. Are there special circumstances that you would like the college to know about?

St. Mary High School
1891-1961

Bishop Fenwick High School
1961-1971

William V. Fisher Catholic High School
1971 - "Into the Future"

Please sign and return to Fisher Catholic as soon as possible so that transcripts can be sent to colleges next year. No transcripts will be sent without a signed release on file.

Permission for Transcript Release

I give permission for William V. Fisher Catholic High School to release my son/daughter's transcript to all colleges, universities, and scholarships to which he/she desires and to which he/she submits applications.

_____
Student Name

_____ _____
Parent Signature Date