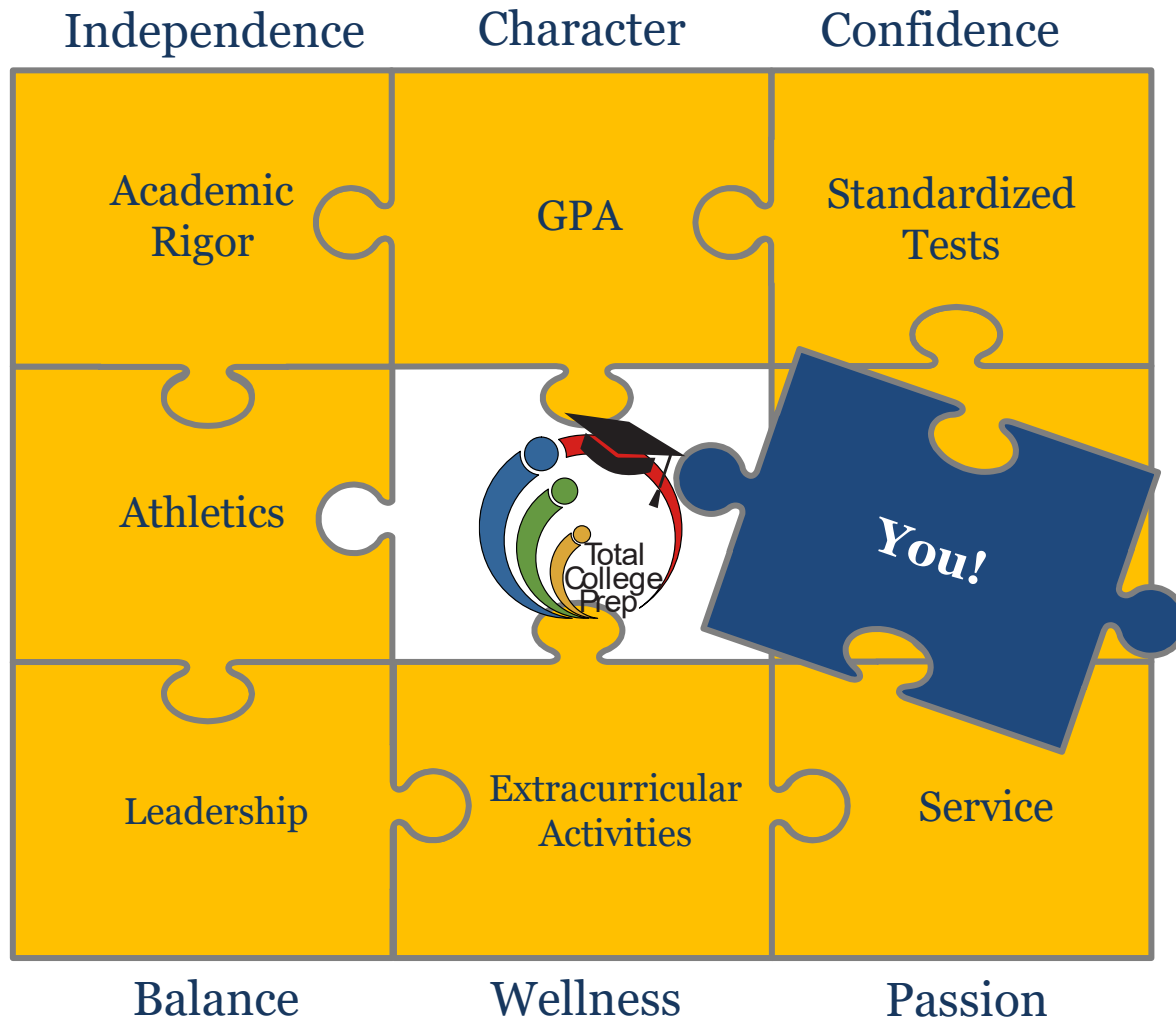


College Admissions: Putting the Pieces Together



COMMON QUESTIONS

Okay...

How much does it cost?

What is the campus culture like?

What is the freshman retention rate?

What is the job/graduate school placement rate?

How far away from home is it?

Does it have football?

What are the dorms like?

Can I live on campus all four years?

What are the study-abroad opportunities?

Does the PhD faculty teach...or research?

How hard is it to get into?

What is the graduation rate?

Does it have Greek Life?

What are the campus crime statistics?

Can I get home on long weekends?

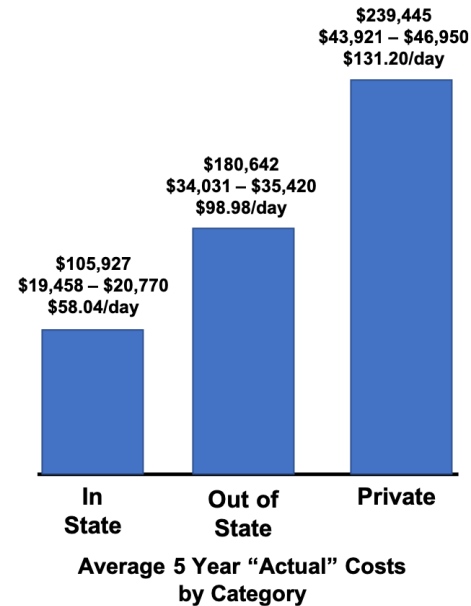
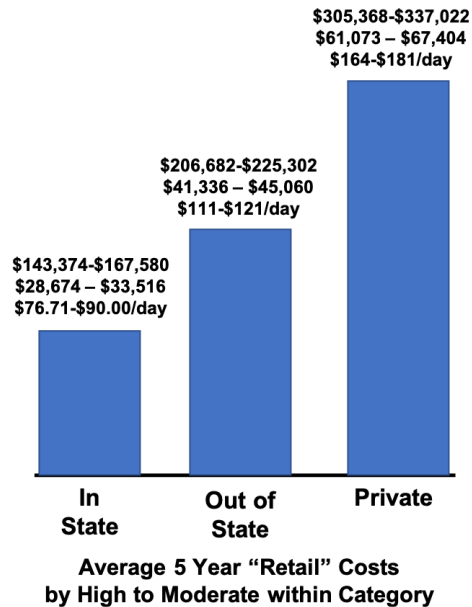
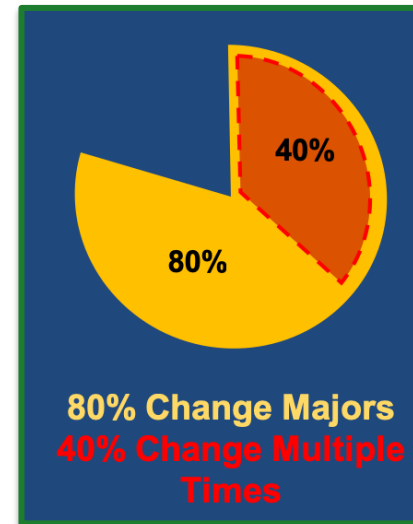
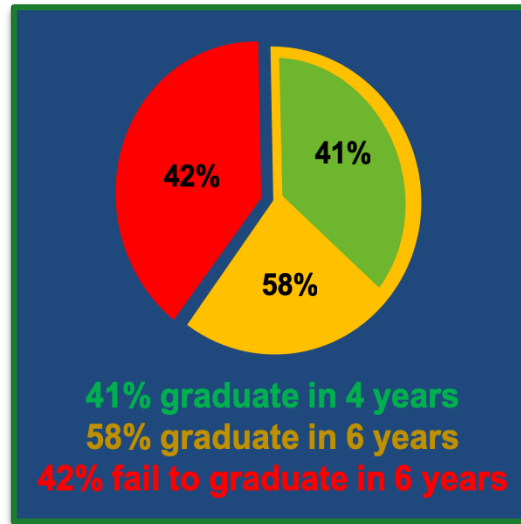
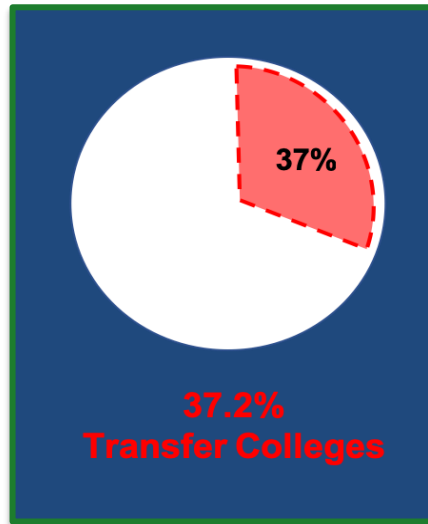
What application do I use for this school?

Will I have to pay for tutoring?

...or printing at the library...?

Public
In-State
Out of State
Private

First – Some Numbers



The Algorithm

Though each college is different, most use a similar holistic algorithm when considering your application.

Some Factors You Control

- Your GPA
- Rigor of Your High School Coursework
- Standardized Test Scores
- Varsity Athletics
- Demonstrated Leadership
- Depth of Extracurricular Activities
- Consistent Service to the Community
- Quality of Primary & Supplementary Essays
- Letters of Recommendation
- Demonstrated Interest in the College
- Work History
- Social Media History
- **Early Decision / Early Action (ED/EA)**

Others You Do Not....

- Your Class Rank
- Academic Reputation of your High School
- Desired Class Demographics:
 - Gender
 - Geographical Diversity
 - Socioeconomic Class
 - Intended Major/Program of Study
 - Range of Student Activities/Expertise
 - Legacy
- **State or Institutional Mandates That You Will Know Nothing About – EVER....**

The Algorithm

- In other words, you might be fully qualified & an excellent candidate for a particular college – & not get in...and it will have almost **nothing** to do with you or your qualifications.
- The college admissions process is **personal** – but you cannot take it **personally!**
- Instead, take **deliberate ownership** over the process:
 - **Control the Controllable** – Put Your Best Foot Forward
 - **Do the Next Right Thing** – Have a Plan – Stick With It
 - **Be Hungry** – Go for It! – It's Your Future
 - **Be Honest** – Know Yourself & Your Capabilities

Control the Controllable

- Control the factors you can control; let the rest go
- Complete **all** applications by **1 November**
- **Standardized tests** matter – whether we like it or not:
 - Take SAT/ACT at least twice – most will “superscore”
 - Prepare diligently – have a study plan & stick with it
 - Test strategies are important – as are pre-test routines
 - Take the test – do your best – forget the rest
 - Standardized test scores are only 1 factor in the algorithm
 - Test Optional does not mean test not recommended
- **GPA** matters – top schools also consider **class rank**

Control the Controllable

- The **“quality” of your coursework** is important:
 - Most- & highly-selective schools will require a vast majority of AP, Honors, &/or Dual Credit Courses
 - Most also “suggest” having taken calculus, four years of science (including chemistry and physics), four years of English, & four years of a foreign language
 - If these courses are not available, take the “highest” level course in each discipline offered by your school
 - AP Test scores are not as important as they used to be; in most cases, you should still take the course in college
 - Emphasize what makes you unique (Project-Based Learning)

Control the Controllable

- **Varsity Athletics (& Competitive Travel Teams):**
 - Colleges prefer candidates with multiple varsity letters
 - Depth: Varsity letter in same sport multiple years
 - Breadth: Varsity letter in multiple sports
 - You do not need to be a superstar; most applicants aren't
 - Emphasizes commitment to a sport, team, school, etc.
 - Reflects time & energy management skills
 - Highlight if you participate in a sport your school does not offer or excel in national/regional level sports (tennis, golf, gymnastics, etc.)
 - Competitive marching band "counts" – as does cheer

Control the Controllable

• **Demonstrated Leadership:**

- Student-Body / Class Officer
- Student Council Member
- Extracurricular Club Officer
- Eagle Scout / Gold Award
- Captain of a Sports Team
- Camp Counselor
- Lead in a Play
- National Honor Society
- Oaks and Acorns
- JOBS Program

• **Extracurricular Activities:**

- Emphasize Depth (longevity) over Breadth (many)
- Emphasize Quality over Quantity
- Academic Teams & Clubs
- School Activity Clubs
- Yearbook, Newspaper
- Theater, Choir, Band
- Community Organizations
- Church / Religious Activities
- Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts

Control the Controllable

- **Service:**

- Quality over Quantity
- Reflects your Passions
- Breadth:
 - School
 - Church
 - Community
 - Scouts
- Examples:
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Meals on Wheels
 - Food Bank/Soup Kitchen
 - Individual Passion Project

- **Work History:**

- Reflects Soft-Skills
Development, Discipline,
Responsibility, Commitment,
Time & Energy Management
- Explains Limited Athletics &
Extracurricular Activities
- Emphasizes You Know How
to Work With & For Others
- Reflects Financial Investment
in Your Future
- Shows Entrepreneurial Spirit

Do the Next Right Thing

- Applying to college requires a **deliberate & disciplined process**
 - Identify your personal interests & abilities, financial resources, & personal preferences
 - Conduct thorough **research** of potential college options:
 - In-State vs. Out-of-State
 - Public vs. Private
 - Urban vs. Rural
 - Location / Distance from Home
 - College Rankings (*US News & World Report, Forbes, Wall Street Journal, Business Insider, College Niche, etc.*)
 - Average Yearly Costs (Tuition + Fees + Room + Board + Travel)
 - Acceptance Rates
 - 4-Year Graduation Rates
 - Freshman Retention Rates
 - Average Class Sizes
 - Student / Faculty Ratio
 - Average SAT/ACT Test Scores
 - Average High School GPA
 - Job / Grad School Placement Rates
 - Potential Major / Program of Study
 - NCAA Athletics
 - Greek Life / Extracurriculars
 - Study Abroad / Internship Opportunities
 - **Clery Act Information**
 - **Common Data Set Review**

Do the Next Right Thing

Plan Your College Admissions Pathway:

- Take ACT 1 & SAT 1 Completed NLT _____
- Identify Personal Requirements Completed NLT _____
- Research Potential Colleges Completed NLT _____
- Identify 12 Colleges to Consider Completed NLT _____
- Comparative Analysis of Colleges Completed NLT _____
- Rank Personal Elite 8 Completed NLT _____
- Solicit Letters of Recommendation Completed NLT _____
- Take ACT 2 & SAT 2 Completed NLT _____
- Identify Elite 8 Application Requirements (Common, Coalition) Completed NLT _____
- Draft Primary Application Essays Completed NLT _____
- Draft Elite 8 (E8) Supplementary Essays Completed NLT _____
- Revise Primary & Supplementary Essays Completed NLT _____
- Complete & Submit E8 Applications Completed NLT _____
- Complete & Submit Additional Apps (as needed) Completed NLT _____

Do the Next Right Thing

- Ensure your **Letters of Recommendation**:
 - Identify the **type** & **duration** of the recommender's relationship w/ you
 - Offer **specific** assessments of your strengths, abilities, potential, contributions, etc.
 - Offer **specific** examples that illustrate the quality of your candidacy for admission at the specific school to which you are applying
 - **Quantify**, when possible, your performance & or potential. For example:
 - “In my eighteen years of coaching football, John is the most coachable and team-oriented player with whom I have ever worked....”
 - “I have taught over 3000 students in my career and Amy ranks in the top 5%.....”
 - Make sure the teacher, counselor, coach, employer knows you well enough to comment **specifically** (& **positively**) upon:
 - Leadership
 - Grit / Persistence
 - Character
 - Strengths
 - Potential
 - Intangibles
 - Academic Abilities
 - Teamwork
 - Accomplishments
 - Work Ethic
 - Soft-Skills
 - Coachability

Do the Next Right Thing

- **Social Media:**

- Be extraordinarily careful about what you post on social media
- You are never off the record
- Colleges actively look for & respond to reports of inflammatory, discriminatory, & offensive social media posts
- Just because you post it on SnapChat doesn't mean someone else hasn't downloaded/saved the image or offensive message
- There are many examples of colleges rescinding an acceptance based upon an applicant's offensive social media post

- **Demonstrated Interest / Contacting Colleges:**

- You should call &/or email each of your Elite 8 schools **at least** three times with pertinent questions
- Admissions Departments track these interactions
- **NEVER** have your parent or counselor call – only **you!**
- Keep a record of all correspondence with potential colleges

Do the Next Right Thing

- **Primary & Supplementary Essays:**
 - Be **memorable**. Admissions counselors have read THOUSANDS of applicant essays. Make them want to read one more – YOURS!
 - Be **interesting**. Grab their attention & hold on to it!
 - Be **specific**. Do not rely upon clichés about how you have “always wanted to attend Duke ever since the beginning of time...”
 - Be **authentic**. Ensure the essay captures the best, most interesting, & awesome version of “you” – not some imaginary “perfect” candidate for _____ University.
 - This is your opportunity to emphasize your **intangibles** – to prove that you are “more” than just the sum of your grades, class rank, standardized test scores, & extracurricular & service activities.
 - Who are you? What are your intangibles? Why are you special? What makes you a “perfect” fit for _____ University?
 - Ensure your essay is **grammatically correct** & formatted properly.
 - Use **active & dynamic verbs** in lieu of forms of “to be.”

Common Application Essays

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma — anything of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Sample Supplementary Essays

- You are hosting a dinner party this weekend and you can invite ANY three people—living, dead, real, or fictional. Tell us whom you would invite and why. What would be your first topic of conversation? (250 words) (University of Texas at Austin - Honors)
- Help us get to know you better. Please write five sentences (numbered 1-5) that give us some insight into you, your life, your interests and your experiences. (UT - Honors)
- At the University of Colorado Boulder, no two Buffs are alike. We value difference and support equity and inclusion of all students and their many intersecting identities. Pick one of your unique identities and describe its significance. (Min:250/Max:650)
- Student self-governance, which encourages student investment and initiative, is a hallmark of the UVA culture. In her fourth year at UVA, Laura Nelson was inspired to create Flash Seminars, one-time classes which facilitate high-energy discussion about thought-provoking topics outside of traditional coursework. If you created a Flash Seminar, what ideas would you explore and why? (University of Virginia)
- What work of art, music, science, mathematics, or literature has surprised, unsettled, or challenged you, and in what way? (250 words) (University of Virginia)
- Macalester is one of few highly selective liberal arts colleges located in the middle of a metropolitan area. Students benefit from the strong sense of community on campus and opportunities to engage in academic, social, and civic engagement options in the Twin Cities. Have you thought about how Macalester's location might impact your experience? If so, in what ways? (500 words max)

Let's review.

Identify three new things you learned about college admissions today.



