

# THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

## Class of 2012

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

Welcome to the exciting process of applying for college! Hopefully this handout will answer some of the questions you have about how to apply for college and specifically what you need to do as a student of Manteno High School. Please share this information with your parents.

### *What resources are available to help me?*

#### *1. Visits from College Representatives*

- Check the schedule on our website by clicking the “College Representatives” tab or the bulletin board outside of the counseling offices for scheduled visits.
- You must get a signed pass from the counseling office if the college representative is visiting during homeroom.

#### *2. [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com)*

- Check with the counseling office for the school’s username and password.
- Once you have logged in, you can log in to your portfolio that you’ve already created. If you need your log in or password, check with Mrs. Rutledge.
- You can search for colleges, majors, take an assessment, or build a resume of achievements
- Take time to visit the college web sites of your choice. You can find them all through links on this website. This will help you answer a lot of questions.

#### *3. Mrs. Rutledge, Class of 2012 Counselor*

- I know a thing or two about applying to college!
- I am here to answer questions & ease your fears about the college application process.
- I will mail all of your materials from the counseling office.

#### *4. College Visits*

- As long as you have less than eight absences, your absences are excused as long as a parent calls the school the night before/morning of the college visit. Many schools have open house visits on Columbus Day and Veterans Day.
- Go to the college's website to learn more on how to register for an open house or how to make an appointment to visit.

## *How many applications should I fill out?*

- What is appropriate will vary from student to student
- Usually 3-5 application
- Know the difference between the selectivity of the schools in terms of admission
  - "Reach School"
  - "Target School"
  - "Safety School"

## *What are College Admission Requirements?*

- Generally Accepted Public University Requirements:

English – 4 years

Math – 3 years

Science – 3 years

Social Sciences – 3 years\*

Some schools also require 2 years of a foreign language or 2 years of Fine Arts

\*Manteno High School only requires 2 years, so you must take an additional social science credit for college (i.e. World History, Psychology/Sociology)

- Other factors taken into consideration:

GPA, class rank, ACT score, activities/leadership, essays, recommendations

## *How do I fill out applications?*

### *1. Obtaining the Application*

- Most college applications are now online. If you have trouble finding them, Mrs. Rutledge can help you.

- You can also download the application from the school's website if you feel more comfortable with a paper application. Mrs. Rutledge can help you do that if you're unsure where to find it.
- Many schools prefer that you fill out their application online. You will need a credit card to pay the application fee. Please note what is required from the school you are applying to. For example, many of you will have to print a signature page for the counselor.

## *2. Completing the Application*

- Fill out the entire thing! Check and double check the application before you bring it to your counselor.
- Many applications have separate sections for the student, the counselor, and possibly a teacher. If this is the situation, please give those people their parts as soon as possible. There are times where you and the counselor are sending different parts of the application to the school at different times. The college will just start a file for you and add the information as it is received.

## *3. Letters of Recommendation*

- If you need a letter of recommendation, give a teacher/counselor a filled out recommendation form (found in the counseling office). You need to give them at least 2 weeks to write it. The teacher will write a better letter if you give them more time. Think about following up with a simple "thank you" or a note to let the teacher know that you appreciate their efforts.

## *What do I need to bring to my counselor?*

1. Completed and Signed Application or signature page from internet
2. Letter of Recommendation (if it's needed and was given back to you)
3. Transcript request form- please have the right address on it
4. If you didn't do it online, you need a CHECK (not cash) for the school's application fee.
5. Paperclip everything and give it to Mrs. Rutledge. She will then mail it with your official transcript.

## *What about my ACT scores?*

Schools will want your official ACT score of your best test. Many of you put down four colleges you would like to have your scores sent to when you registered for the ACT. If you are applying to a school that doesn't have your scores, then you need them sent there. Go to <http://actstudent.org> and click on **send your scores** to have them sent. You will need a credit card. Sending scores can cost anywhere from \$9 (standard) - \$13 (priority) per school.

If you'd like to retake the ACT, the next test date is October 22<sup>nd</sup>. You can register online by going to <http://actstudent.org>. Other test dates include December 10<sup>th</sup>, February 11<sup>th</sup> (not at MHS), April 14<sup>th</sup> (not at MHS), and June 9<sup>th</sup>.

Two codes that you will need when registering:

High School Code: 142755

Test Center Code: 208000

**A NOTE TO THOSE APPLYING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHAMPAIGN:**

University of Illinois will continue to use the highest composite test score for admission, but they do look at highest sub-score for some programs. Students are encouraged to send all test scores to Illinois and take advantage of their free score reports at the time of testing. For students applying for the freshman class of 2012, **we will only take test scores directly from the testing center, not from the high school transcript or off a copy of the student report. *What this means is that you must go to [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to send your scores if you did not put U of I down when you registered for the ACT.***

## *Are there application deadlines?*

Please be aware of the application deadlines for the schools you are applying to. Many schools have priority deadlines in late October and November. This means you have a better chance of getting in if you apply by these priority dates.

If a deadline is Nov. 1, you need to give all of your application materials in steps 1-4 above to Mrs. Rutledge by Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>. Give her all materials at least two weeks before the application is due. From the date of mailing, allow 2-4 weeks for a college to acknowledge receipt of the application/transcript. If you have questions, don't hesitate to call the college's Admissions Office.

Be Organized. Save every letter and any other information you might receive from schools during the school year.

## *How do I get money to pay for college?*

All schools have scholarships you can apply for. Do your homework and check the school's website to see if you would be eligible. Some schools send the counseling office materials that will be posted in the counseling office.

### Federal Financial Aid

You cannot begin to apply for federal financial aid until **January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year you will enroll in college.** It is recommended that you apply for federal financial aid online (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>) or fill out a paper application printed from their website. Encourage your parents to file their taxes as soon as possible this winter/spring. They will need to do this in order for you to start the FAFSA application process. There will be financial aid workshops in the area in January and February. Check in the counseling office for dates and times and listen to the announcements.

Obviously, the cost of college is going to be a big determinant of your future plans. That is why you need to talk to your parents/guardians about money for college. Believe it or not, they do have an important say in this matter so please discuss it with them and listen to them. The government's philosophy is that **the responsibility for educating students rests with their families**. Many families are disappointed when they find out how much they have to contribute to college costs. Also, keep in mind that you have to pay back loans which can be a 10 year (or longer) process after graduation. So if a school is offering you a good financial aid package, even though it is your second or third choice, you might want to consider it.

### Scholarships

The majority of the scholarships awarded to students come from the colleges that they will attend. This is especially true for private schools. Most of these scholarships are related to academics and based on grade point average, ACT score, and class rank. Some schools automatically consider you for all of their scholarships once you submit your application for admission. Others, however, have a completely separate application for their scholarships. You need to go to the school's website to determine how you apply for scholarships at that college. You are encouraged to call the Financial Aid Office of the college if you are confused or having a difficult time getting answers from their website.

If there is a separate application for the academic scholarships at the college, please pay attention to the deadlines! Many of them are from November – February.

Some scholarships will become available during this first semester. However, January- April is by far the busiest time for scholarships. All scholarship information will be posted in the counseling office as well as on the counseling website. Again, Mrs. Rutledge will talk to you in December about financial aid.

If you would like to start searching for national scholarships, the following sites are reputable and recommended: <http://www.fastweb.com> and <http://www.scholarships.com> .

This is also great website for financial aid and other post secondary info: <http://www.collegezone.com>

## *What if I plan on playing sports at a Division 1 or Division 2 college?*

You need to register with the NCAA clearinghouse. To do that, go to:

<http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net>

- ✓ Click on prospective student athletes
- ✓ Click on registration forms for U.S students

Once you've completed the forms online, you will print out two pages for you and your parents to sign and then you will bring them to the appropriate guidance counselor.

## *What about junior colleges?*

If you are interested in applying to a junior college in the fall such as Kankakee Community College or Joliet Junior College, it is essentially the same process as applying to a four-year college for university. KCC applications are in the counseling office and a representative from KCC will visit many times during the school year during homeroom. Those students with the academic credentials can apply for a program in Health Careers before winter break. For example, the nursing program application deadline is in January. There is usually no other application deadline for junior colleges. Special applications, however, need to be filled out for programs in Health Career Program at Kankakee Community College and the Vet Tech Program at Joliet Junior College (<https://www.jjc.edu/admissions/Pages/vet-tech-app.aspx>).

If there is a chance you might attend KCC, you can apply for their Baccalaureate Scholars Program if you meet or are close to the preferred requirements. See Mrs. Rutledge in November for the application. If you are considering KCC, you have nothing to lose by applying.

### *Baccalaureate Scholars Program*

KCC's Baccalaureate Scholars program is a competitive-entry, two-year program for academically talented students who plan to transfer to selective colleges and universities. The program provides a stimulating learning environment for students who exhibit academic excellence. Baccalaureate Scholars pursue challenging programs of study that meet their educational goals and the requirements of the four-year college or university to which they plan to transfer. The refinement of skills in writing, research, problem solving and critical thinking is emphasized. By providing challenging intellectual content, scholars receive an enriching educational experience. Personalized assistance with course planning and academic advising will enhance students' opportunities at transfer institutions.

The purpose of the program

- Challenge and stimulate participants in their intellectual, creative, and cultural growth. Assist high achievers in their pursuit of academic excellence
- Provide a community of scholars to encourage intellectual development
- Provide peer and mentor assistance and support to exchange ideas and foster growth

Preferred requirements for admission to the program

- Rank in the top 15% of graduating class
- Have an ACT composite score of 25 or above with no standard score under 23
- Have a high school grade point average of 3.5 or higher
- Complete the KCC COMPASS test with appropriate scores (if no ACT scores)

Requirements for retention in the program

- Maintain grade point average of 3.25 or higher

- Complete at least 15 credit hours each semester
- Participate in Baccalaureate Scholars events and activities
- Complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) each year of participation

#### Privileges

- Full scholarships for tuition, fees and books!!!
- Participation in off-campus cultural events
- Eligibility for membership in Phi Theta Kappa, international honor society of the two-year college
- Personalized academic advising and assistance in planning his/her academic program
- Direction and support in planning a successful transfer to a four-year university
- Annual recognition dinner honoring scholars and their families

## *Not planning on attending college?*

### *Military*

If any student is interested in entering a branch of the military, please see Mrs. Rutledge as soon as possible so she can give you the appropriate information. Many representatives from the military give presentations during homeroom to students who are interested. Many scholarships are available via the military as well.

### *Vocational Schools*

Any student interested in a trade/vocational post secondary school should see Mrs. Rutledge as soon as possible to receive pertinent information

## *When can I see Mrs. Rutledge?*

Mrs. Rutledge is in the office every **Monday, Wednesday, and Friday**. If you stop in on a Tuesday or Thursday, Mrs. Murphy, the counseling assistant, can schedule an appointment for you on a day that Mrs. Rutledge is in the office.

Email: [jrutledge@manteno5.org](mailto:jrutledge@manteno5.org)

Phone: 815-928-7106



## **Guidelines for Requesting Teacher Recommendations**

1. You should ask two teachers who have known you in an academic class if they would be willing to write letters for you and if they could recommend you strongly (“Would you be able to write me a strong letter of recommendation for college?”).
2. Even if the college only asks for one recommendation, copy the form so you can have it for future applications requiring letters. Be sure to check each college’s application. Some may specify which teachers to ask. Depending on the program you are applying for, they may require a recommendation from a math teacher or an art teacher.
3. You should make sure these teachers have everything they need at least a month before the application is due.
4. Ask your teachers to seal the letter of recommendation and either give it to your counselor or put it in the counselor’s mailbox.
5. Fill in your name and address on every faculty recommendation form. If the college application does not provide a form, see your counselor and pick up a standard form from the counseling office.
6. Be sure to give each teacher the application deadline for each letter needed.
7. Letters often take an hour to write....so say please and WRITE a thank You note!





## Tips on Writing the Admissions Essay

It may be only 500 words, but the admissions essay portion of a college application can mean the difference between acceptance and rejection. How you write your personal essay shows the admissions committee why you are different from everybody else. It provides information about you that test scores, grades, and extracurricular pursuits just cannot. You can use the essay to describe a favorite activity, to tell a story about yourself, or even a story about your dog, but make sure to really *use* it -- in a way that captures the readers attention and shows that you are exceptional.

**Step One: Brainstorming** You should expect to devote about one to two weeks simply thinking up possible essay subjects. From this process of brainstorming, you may find a topic you had not thought of at first. Here are some questions to consider:

### What Are You Like?

- What is your strongest personality trait? Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? How did you develop this attribute?
- How would your friends characterize you? What would they write about if they were writing your admissions essay for you?
- Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?
- Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something to which you were previously blind?

### What Have You Done?

- What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments?
- What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and succeeded? What made you successful? Have you ever struggled mightily for something and failed? How did you respond?
- What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?

### Where Do You Want to Go?

- Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with?
- What are your dreams of the future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful?
- How does this particular university fit into your plans for the future? Why do you want to spend two to six years of your life at a particular school?

**Step Two: Selecting an Essay Topic** As these thoughts start to solidify into an essay topic, think about execution. What sounded like a good idea might prove impossible in the writing. Most importantly, think of how you can make the subject matter original. Even seemingly boring essay topics can sound interesting if creatively approached. With an essay question in mind, think over the following questions:

- Will your topic only repeat information listed elsewhere on your application? If so, pick a new topic. Don't mention GPAs or standardized test scores in your essay.
- Can you offer vivid supporting paragraphs to your essay topic? If you cannot easily think of supporting paragraphs with concrete examples, you should probably choose a different essay topic.
- Will an admissions officer remember your topic after a day of reading hundreds of essays? What will the officer remember about your topic? What will the officer remember about you? What will your lasting impression be?

### Choose a Story

The best essays tell a story about the applicant. The essay does not have to be the story of your whole life, but rather a small glimpse of it, one that is rich with meaning and alive with imagery. It often helps to think about the impact that past events have had on you. In one admissions essay written by a student who was accepted to Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Stanford, an ordinary story is told in a unique and captivating way. In this narrative about hiking up a mountain, the student also conveys a deep appreciation for science, as well as a dedication to the hard work required to fully understand the universe:

Although the first few miles of the hike up Mt. Madison did not offer fantastic views, the vistas became spectacular once I climbed above tree line. Immediately, I sensed that understanding the natural world parallels climbing a mountain. Much like every step while hiking leads the hiker nearer the mountain peak, all knowledge leads the scientist nearer total understanding.

Entitled "Hiking to Understanding," this essay tells the story of one hike, but at the same time, gives a complete idea of the author's values, interests, and philosophy. Thus, the essay presents run-of-the-mill subject matter in an out-of-the-ordinary way.

**Step Three: Writing the Essay** You must bear in mind your two goals: to persuade the admissions officer that you are extremely worthy of admission and to make the admissions officer aware that you are more than a GPA and a standardized score, that you are a real-life, intriguing personality. But before you can convince an admissions officer of this, you must first grab his or her attention.

### The Introduction

Most admissions officers spend at most 2 minutes reading your essay. With this reality in mind, spend the most time on your introduction. One technique is to create mystery or intrigue in this first paragraph. At the very least, you should not give away the whole story right at the beginning. Give the admissions officer a reason to keep reading. As an example, the first sentence of the "Hiking" essay reads as follows:

Surrounded by thousands of stars, complete silence, and spectacular mountains, I stood atop New Hampshire's Presidential Range awestruck by nature's beauty.

This first sentence sets the mood for the essay, it draws the reader into the scene, but it does not state the author's argument or even the plot of the story to follow. The reader has to continue reading in order to learn what happens next.

### The Body

After the first paragraph has been perfected, you must ensure that the body paragraphs relate to the introduction. It helps to have a theme or phrase that runs throughout the entire essay. In "Hiking to Understanding," the author uses the mountain as a unifying image:

Some people during their lives climb many small hills. However, to have the most accurate view of the world, I must be dedicated to climbing the biggest mountains I can find. Too often people simply hike across a flat valley without ascending because they content themselves with the scenery. The mountain showed me that I cannot content myself with the scenery.

Also notice that the author uses simple language. Many students think that big words make good essays, but powerful ideas are often best expressed in simple and elegant prose.

Another way to impress an admissions officer is by using specific examples and evocative touches of imagery that stay clear of cliché. The application essay lends itself to imagery, since the entire essay requires your experiences as supporting details. Successful essays stick to the mantra, "show, don't tell." Here's one example from the "Hiking" essay:

When night fell upon the summit, I stared at the slowly appearing stars until they completely filled the night sky. Despite the windy conditions and below freezing temperatures, I could not tear myself away.

This passage shows how description of the stars and cold can make us both imagine the scenery and understand the author's point of view. It tells us what the author feels and thinks, more so than if the author had spelled it out for us.

### **Finishing Up**

The conclusion is your last chance to persuade the reader or impress upon them your qualifications. Expand upon the broader implications of your discussion. The "Hiking" essay does this successfully, both expanding on the description of the scene as well as on the scene's meaning for the author:

When observing Saturn's rising, the Milky Way Cloud, and the Perseid meteor shower, I simultaneously felt a great sense of insignificance and purpose. Obviously, earthly concerns are insignificant to the rest of the universe. However, I experienced the overriding need to understand the origins and causes of these phenomena.

Don't be surprised if the writing process takes many days. Few writers can dash out a quality essay in just a few sittings. It takes awhile to find the perfect structure, wording, and imagery. If you have the time, spend a week away from your draft; when you return to it, you will read it with fresh eyes. Ask friends and family for help. Other readers will find small mistakes that your brain has ceased to recognize, and they will answer the essential question, "what makes this essay memorable?"

**Take EssayEdge.com's Free Online Admissions Essay Help Course at <http://www.essayedge.com/course/>**