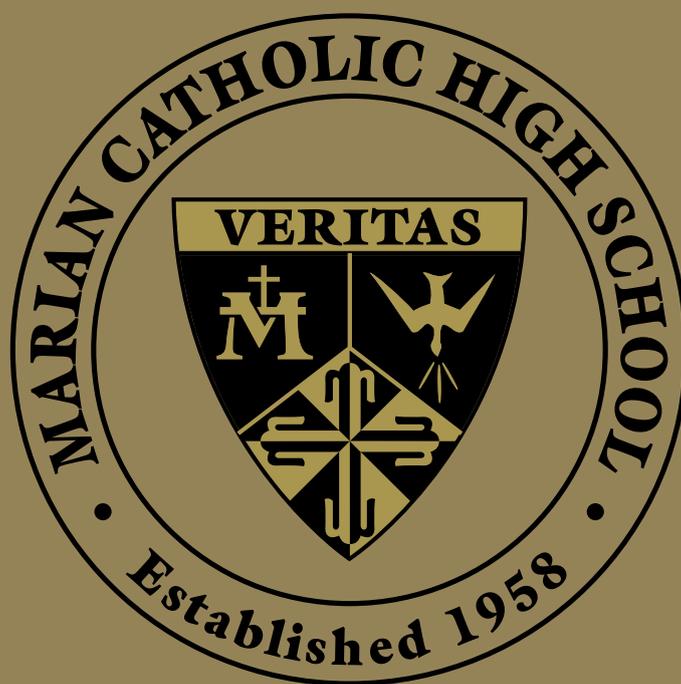


COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE



MARIAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the College Planning Guide is to acquaint both parents and students with the college admission process.

PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION BEGINS THE FIRST DAY A STUDENT ENTERS MARIAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL. WHILE APPLYING TO COLLEGE TAKES PLACE IN THE FALL OF SENIOR YEAR, COLLEGE ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS LOOK AT A STUDENT'S TOTAL ACADEMIC PROFILE. MARIAN PROVIDES A RIGOROUS COLLEGE PREP CURRICULUM AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT STUDENTS MEET THE CHALLENGE AND DO THEIR BEST FROM THE BEGINNING. CREATING "SCHOLARS WITH A SOUL" MEANS WE TAKE THE LIFE OF THE MIND AND FAITH SERIOUSLY. CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE AND RANK IN CLASS ARE COMPUTED BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS. STUDENTS CANNOT MAKE THE MISTAKE OF "WAITING UNTIL JUNIOR YEAR" TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE.

SEARCHING FOR A COLLEGE MATCH IS A HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED PROCESS. THE COUNSELORS IN THE GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT WORK DILIGENTLY TO ASSIST STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE SEARCH. A GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF COLLEGE COUNSELING IS "COLLEGE IS A MATCH TO BE MADE, NOT A PRIZE TO BE WON".

AS STUDENTS AND PARENTS ENTER THIS SUBJECTIVE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS, THEY MUST BE CAREFUL OF ATTACHING HOPES AND DREAMS TO ONLY ONE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY, BEING CAREFUL NOT TO CREATE A MYTHIC PLACE. MOST PEOPLE CAN BE HAPPY AT ANY NUMBER OF COLLEGES. IT IS ADVISABLE TO INVESTIGATE DIFFERENT COLLEGES WITH VARYING DEGREES OF SELECTIVITY – HIGHLY SELECTIVE TO LESS SELECTIVE – THAT CAN SATISFY ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND EXTRACURRICULAR PREFERENCES. THE HAPPIEST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IS THE ONE WHO IN APRIL OF SENIOR YEAR CAN SAY, "IT ALMOST DOESN'T MATTER WHERE I AM ACCEPTED. WHATEVER COLLEGE I ATTEND, I WILL BE HAPPY, SATISFIED AND PREPARED TO BE SUCCESSFUL." THIS PERSPECTIVE IS REACHED BY RESEARCHING SCHOOLS, USING THE RESOURCES OF THE COLLEGE ROOM AND WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE GUIDANCE COUNSELORS.

THERE ARE EVENING PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS HELD THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR TO HELP WITH THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS. REMINDERS ABOUT PROGRAMS AND DEADLINES WILL BE COMMUNICATED IN THE GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER. INFORMATION WILL ALSO BE POSTED ON FAMILY CONNECTION. THERE WILL BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOTH PARENTS AND STUDENTS TO TALK AND MEET WITH COUNSELORS DURING SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR, AND SENIOR YEARS.

USING THIS GUIDE NOW GIVES PARENTS AND STUDENTS A CHANCE TO BE PROACTIVE, LOOKING AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE. PLEASE CONTACT THE GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Making a College Match.....	4
College Planning Timeline	5
Applying to College	8
College Application Procedures	10
Types of Colleges and Universities	12
College Testing	14
Paying for College.....	16
Sites on the Internet	19
Notes	20

MAKING A COLLEGE MATCH

College selection is a process that begins with you, the student. In order to make informed decisions about college, you must first be able to think critically about your own abilities and aspirations. Matching talents and interests with desired colleges is at the heart of the college search process. Self-assessment is the starting point. This process offers you the opportunity to honestly assess your strengths, weaknesses, needs, desires and dreams relative to the colleges and universities you wish to explore. Only after you complete a thorough self-assessment should specific colleges be considered. Rather than trying to fit yourself to the college profile, you should match a school to your own aspirations. Programs to assist you in this process, such as the PLAN test, Family Connection, and Bridges will be introduced to you during your sophomore and junior year.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Choosing a college is an important choice since there are more than 3,000 colleges in the United States. Your first choice is to decide whether you truly desire a college education; if so, you should have the desire to learn and be able to articulate why you want to go. How do you want to be different as a result of going to college?

Choosing a college involves a series of steps; it is important to take your time in carefully completing each step before moving on to the next. You need to be an active participant in this process, open to new information, organized, and willing to consult with your guidance counselors who know you and know colleges. There are no “good” or “bad” colleges – just good or bad matches for individual students. The goal is to research and find several colleges that meet your needs.

5 “P’s” can categorize the principles of making a college match: (Person, Program, People, Place, and Price)

PERSON How is the person applying to college evaluated by the college?
Each person is identified in a variety of ways:

- **Transcript** – Courses taken, levels, senior year course schedule, grade patterns, rank in class, and grade point average
- **Co-curricular Activities at Marian Catholic** – Quality as well as quantity
- **Activities outside of Marian Catholic** – Church, community, family, employment
- **Test Data** – College entrance exam scores
- **Writing ability** – The ability to express yourself clearly in writing is closely aligned to your ability to think clearly. Many colleges require an essay as part of their application.

PROGRAM It is said, “Education is not preparing students for their first job—they need to be prepared for their last job.”

- **Majors** available as well as diversity within that major
- **Job Trends** – Need for preparation as global citizens with transferable skills
- **Special Programs** – Study abroad, honors programs, internships

PEOPLE The majority of your time in college will be spent outside the classroom; with what kind of people do you want to share your life?

- **Academic environment** – Will students compete with or learn from each other?
- **Diversity** – Ethnic, religious, geographic, cultural
- **Socioeconomic comfort level**
- **Interest areas**
- **Out of class activities**
- **Selectivity** – Do most students match your ability, or do you flourish in a more or less challenging environment?

PLACE Where you attend is influenced by various factors:

- **Type of learning environment** – Community college, 4-year commuter, 4-year residential, emphasis on undergraduate or graduate learning
- **Location** – Region/state, city, suburban, rural, climate, available transportation
- **Size** – Consider your learning style and personality. Don’t pre-judge by limiting your search to colleges larger than Marian Catholic. There are many small colleges that change lives.
- **Distance** – Physical as well as emotional distance from home

PRICE The amount of money families can give to a college education is determined by more than annual income—number of children in college, scholarships, saving plans, assets, etc.

- **Availability of financial aid** – varies greatly with each college
- **Cost of attendance** – Don't focus on the “sticker price” only; some of the more expensive colleges have better resources to meet financial need
- **Availability for student employment, grants, scholarships, loans**
- **Apply for admission and financial aid and make the college prove that you can not afford to attend there**

After having summarized which aspects of **Person, Program, People, Place, and Price** are most important to *the student* for a college match, investigate which colleges offer matching characteristics by using the resources available at Marian and on the Internet. This research combined with campus visits and discussions with students and college personnel will help you to determine college settings, which might prove to match you. Knowing your own priorities can help you put the advantages and disadvantages of individual colleges into perspective as you compare one college with another.

REMEMBER – The college selection process is a process that needs to be followed with the student (YOU) in the lead.

COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE — SOPHOMORE YEAR

At the beginning of sophomore year, college may seem a distant goal. However, in two short years, you will be applying to college. How you perform academically in your sophomore year will influence your prospects of being admitted to the college(s) of your choice that you apply to in senior year.

If you are not satisfied with your academic performance in your first year of high school, it is important that you begin to improve your GPA this year. Remember, it is a student's cumulative GPA that colleges look at when deciding to accept or deny an applicant. Earning better grades this year will help your chances.

If your grades from your first year accurately reflect your ability as a student, continue to work and improve them. Don't get careless or lazy about your academic performance. If your cumulative GPA drops during sophomore year, you will have to work extra hard during junior year to return your GPA to its original level.

Here are specific events/things to do during sophomore year:

Fall of Sophomore Year

Take the PLAN test at Marian. The PLAN test serves a dual purpose: 1) It is a test that measures the same academic skills as the ACT and provides you with an estimated ACT composite score range. 2) It also provides you with information about your interests and possible major and career choices.

(Consider taking the PSAT/NMSQT. Although the PSAT/NMSQT is a test primarily for juniors, some sophomores take it for practice.)

Attend local college nights/fairs—specific details about dates, times, and locations will be announced in the *Guidance Newsletter* and in *Family Connection*.

- College Fair at Prairie State
- NACAC College Fair
- NACAC College Fair for the Performing and Visual Arts

Second Semester of Sophomore Year

When you are selecting classes for junior year, be aware that colleges look at your academic curriculum. As a general rule, you should take as many college prep math, science, social studies, and foreign language classes as you can academically handle.

It is important that you explore the possibility of attending a summer program at a college or university. These are programs that introduce you to college life. You will live on a college campus and you will learn about possibilities for yourself in different majors/careers. Information regarding these programs is on *Family Connection* as well as in a cabinet in the Benish College Room. Check, too, with a particular college/university that you are interested in to see if they offer any summer programs.

Utilize computer programs to find potential careers. These programs will also allow a student to store school-to-career information and start a résumé.

COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE – JUNIOR YEAR

This is the year that you begin to seriously examine your post-secondary choices. It is during this year that you will actively investigate many types of colleges and universities, trying to find ones that match your interests.

Here are specific events/things to do during junior year:

Ongoing Activities throughout Junior Year

Use Family Connection or any college search website to find colleges that interest you.

Meet with College Representatives in the College Room. A schedule of the representatives visiting Marian can be found in Family Connection.

Attend Open Houses and College Visit Programs hosted by colleges and universities.

Watch for seminars on: applying to highly selective colleges and universities, and applying to college when you don't meet admission requirements.

October

Take the PSAT/NMSQT at Marian. The PSAT serves a dual purpose: 1) It is good practice for the SAT and gives you an idea of how you will do on the SAT. 2) Students whose scores are exceptionally high will be recognized by the National Merit Foundation. This recognition can lead to scholarships.

Attend local college nights/fairs—specific details about dates, times and locations will be announced in the Guidance Newsletter and in Family Connection.

College Fair at Prairie State

NACAC College Fair

Performing and Visual Arts College Fair

November

Investigate the various test prep options that are available.

December

Sign up for test prep courses for the ACT and/or SAT

Register for the Spring ACT and SAT.

January

Request a College Counseling Appointment. Information mailed home in mid-January.

February

ACT test date (second Saturday)

When selecting classes for senior year, keep in mind that colleges will look at your senior year schedule. They will expect you to have a schedule comparable to your first three years. As a general rule, it is recommended that students take four academic subjects. The more selective universities will expect a student to take five academic subjects as a senior.

Plan college visits over Easter vacation.

Come for your College Counseling Appointment with your parents.

Register for March SAT Reasoning and April ACT.

Explore the possibility of attending a summer program at a college or university. These programs introduce you to college life on their campus and you will also learn about possibilities in different careers/fields. Information about these programs is in Family Connection and is also stored in a cabinet in the Benish College Room. You might also check with a particular college/university that you are interested in to see what programs they offer.

If you have not already done so, begin your college search in earnest. Decide what factors are most important to you in choosing a college. As you start looking more seriously at colleges, review the section on "Making A College Match."

Complete a scholarship search on the Web. Fastweb.com and CollegeAnswer.com are two sites that we recommend for Internet scholarship searches.

March/April

Come for your College Counseling Appointment with your parents.

Visit colleges.

Take SAT Reasoning test and ACT test.

Register for the SAT Subject Tests if appropriate. These tests are one-hour tests that measure knowledge in specific subject areas (biology, math, history, etc.). Some selective colleges require or recommend that applicants take one or more of these tests for admission and/or placement. (Colleges that require the SAT Subject tests will list it as a requirement in their admissions information.) See a counselor for information and registration forms.

May

Register for the June ACT test if you wish to retake it or were unable to take it earlier.

SAT Reasoning and Subject test date (first Saturday)

Plan a college visit over the summer if you have not already done so.

Come for your College Counseling Appointment with your parents.

June

SAT Reasoning and Subject test date (first Saturday)

ACT test date (second Saturday)

Summer

If you are concerned about test scores from junior year, consider test preparation options over the summer to get ready for retaking ACT or SAT in fall of senior year.

Visit colleges.

Plan for college visits during senior year.

Request applications from colleges that you are considering.

COLLEGE PLANNING TIMELINE – SENIOR YEAR

Ongoing Activities throughout Senior Year

Continue to search and apply for scholarships for which you are eligible.

August

If you have not already done so, complete a scholarship search on the Web. DO IT NOW.

Register for September ACT if you need to raise your score for admission and/or scholarship purposes.

September

Finalize fall college visit plans. When possible, include campus overnight visits. VISIT!!!

Register for October ACT, October SAT, or November SAT Reasoning or Subject tests, if you need to raise your score for admission and/or scholarship purposes.

ACT test date (third or fourth Saturday)

Meet with College Representatives in the College Room throughout the fall. A schedule of the representatives visiting Marian is available in Family Connection.

October

If applying Early Decision/Early Action, your application must be turned in to the college counselors by October 1st.

SAT Reasoning test or Subject tests date (second Saturday)

ACT test date (fourth Saturday)

Attend local college nights/fairs – specific details about dates, times and locations are printed in the Guidance Newsletter and posted in Family Connection.

College Fair at Prairie State

NACAC College Fair

NACAC Performing and Visual Arts College Fair

Applications for state universities are turned in to the college counselors by October 15th. If you apply online, notify the

counselors so that a transcript may be sent.

Register for December SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests or ACT, if you need to raise your score for admission and/or scholarship purposes.

November

SAT Reasoning or Subject tests test date (first Saturday)

Applications for private colleges and universities should be handed in to college counselors by November 1st.

December

Attend College Financial Aid Night at Marian.

SAT Reasoning and Subject test date (first Saturday)

ACT test date (second Saturday)

January

File FAFSA online anytime after January 1st.

February

Financial Aid Workshop—Date/Time TBA. FAFSA workshops assist families and students with completing the FAFSA online. Families attending the workshop should bring all completed or estimated income tax forms, as well as any other asset information for the student and parents, in order to complete the FAFSA online. Please check the Guidance Newsletter and Family Connection for the date and time of this Program.

Explore the possibility of attending a summer program/internship to explore potential careers. Information about these programs is in Family Connection and in the Benish College Room.

March/April

Receive and evaluate financial award letters.

Visit colleges again if you are undecided on which one to attend.

Send the required college deposit to the school you have decided to attend. Do not miss the May 1st deadline or the college may not hold your place.

Send thank you notes for scholarships, to those who have written letters of recommendation for you, or to admission personnel who were especially helpful.

May

GRADUATION—CONGRATULATIONS!!!!

APPLYING TO COLLEGE

What is a college looking for when a student's application is received in the admissions office? Colleges will use some, if not all, of the information listed below when deciding whether or not to accept a student. Individual colleges will differ in how they evaluate this information. In general, a student's high school curriculum and grade point average are the most important criteria for admission.

ADMISSION CRITERIA

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Class Rank

Subjects taken

ACT / SAT scores

Recommendations

Personal Essays

Activities/awards

Interviews

Transcript/High School Record/Strength of Schedule

The high school record (transcript) is primary in the evaluation of applicants. The transcript provides in detail a record of academic achievement at Marian Catholic. It expresses the student's performance in the context of Marian's rigorous college prep curriculum. Therefore, with every transcript sent to a college, an academic profile of Marian Catholic is enclosed. Admission officers check to see if the candidate took college prep courses. Consistencies in performance as well as grade

trends are noted. The strength of your curriculum choices is also considered. Some college personnel would rather see B's in honors or AP classes than A's in regular classes.

Grade Point Average

The high school transcript records your cumulative grade point average (GPA). The GPA is the average of a student's semester grades, beginning with freshman year. Marian uses a 4.0 grading scale – A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1. Marian's scale is also "weighted". Honors classes are weighted as follows – A = 4.5, B = 3.5, C = 2.5, D = 1.5. Advanced Placement (AP) classes are weighted as follows – A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2.

Test Scores

The American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) are the college entrance exams that are taken during a student's junior and/or senior year. Most colleges accept test scores from either test. It is important to take the ACT and the SAT during junior year so that you will have time to retake them if your scores are not as high as they need to be to gain college admission or to be considered for a scholarship. You may retake the ACT and the SAT as many times as you want.

This section on test scores is intentionally placed after transcripts to emphasize that they are used in conjunction with transcripts when making admission decisions. For example, Student #1 barely got in when the college made its decisions. She had a terrific test score (ACT 29) but her record had more than its share of C's. Student #2 would never have been admitted to college on her test scores alone, but admissions officials were impressed with her 'A' average, demanding curriculum, and interesting choice of activities. In general, admissions officials prefer students like student #2 who have demonstrated the ability to perform well in school on a daily basis. *Remember this - Strong test scores alone do not guarantee admission and low test scores don't preclude it.*

Registration information is distributed to juniors, may be picked up in Guidance or you may register online at their web sites. For further information on either test, go to their web sites:

ACT – www.actstudent.org SAT – www.collegeboard.com

MARIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL CODE FOR BOTH TESTS IS 141393.

There are several differences in the format of the ACT and SAT, which will be explained later in the section on College Testing.

Class Rank

Class rank is based on a student's cumulative GPA for classes taken at Marian. The student who has the highest GPA in the class is number one, the student with the second highest is number two, etc. The use of class rank at Marian Catholic is always under review. Presently, Marian Catholic believes that the use of class rank is still the best way to present our students for admission to state universities in Illinois. When high schools do not rank their students, universities may use their own scale when determining what students they will admit. Sometimes this criterion lowers a student's GPA. Many colleges, universities and private agencies use rank in class as a standard for awarding their scholarships.

Writing Ability/Student Essay

Most colleges view the essay as the student's voice. It is a personal statement, an opportunity for you to bring your application to life. The essay confirms abilities or attributes that are present in the application. The essay is also helpful when information in a student's application is incomplete or contradictory.

It is not the topic that makes an application essay effective. It is the treatment of the topic that makes an essay effective. Someone who has been engaged in and genuinely affected by an experience, no matter how ordinary, can write a strong creative essay. The key is to remain sincere and write in your "own" voice. Be authentic. Be yourself. Maintain a sincere, enthusiastic tone and include enough details to allow the reader to share in the experience. Take the topic and make it specifically and vividly your own. Key elements to a well-written college essay are creativity, originality, technique, brevity and appearance. Avoid writing what you think admission officers want to hear.

Think. Exert reasonable effort. Write. Wait a couple of weeks. Reread. If you are satisfied with the essay and you think it is a candid reflection of your personality as well as a good indication of your ability and style, submit it.

Recommendations

Those in college admissions realize that the quality and depth varies tremendously. A poorly written letter of recommendation or one that offers only superficial comments is never the cause of a student **not** being accepted. However, a clear and

comprehensive letter of recommendation can make a difference. Students will be given more information about requesting letters of recommendation from teachers.

Activities

There is no one activity that will guarantee being accepted to a college. What is important is to get involved in activities and stick with them. Admissions officers are more interested in candidates who have pursued a few activities in depth than in those who dabbled in many. Special skills and talents will be noted and in some cases help sway the committee's vote. Admissions officers generally look for activities that demonstrate commitment on the part of the student. Participating in community and church activities outside of Marian are just as important. Even holding a part-time job may demonstrate the same qualities that involvement in school activities does.

COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCEDURES

College representatives highly recommended that students apply online. Feedback from college admission offices indicate that applications online are received immediately, less prone to mistakes and processed faster. Therefore, we encourage using the online method for our students when applying to colleges and universities.

Online applications are filled out and submitted on the college's website. Most online applications will require a username and password of the applicant's choice. This will allow applicants to save and return to the application, if necessary. Follow directions completely. All information needs to be completed. **Marian's high school ACT/CEEB code is 141393.** When specified, print the counselor signature page(s). Before submitting an application online, we recommend that students print a copy of the application and have someone else proofread it. Some colleges and universities waive or reduce the application fee if students apply online. Online applications requiring a fee are generally paid with a credit card.

Paper applications for some colleges and universities may be found in the College Room on a limited basis. Paper applications that require a fee are paid by check. All paper applications **MUST** be signed by the student.

When you have completed an application, bring all paperwork – this includes signature pages and/or print-outs from online applications – to your College Counselor. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ANY APPLICATIONS IN GUIDANCE WITHOUT A COLLEGE COUNSELOR CHECKING TO SEE THAT ALL REQUIRED PAPERWORK IS INCLUDED.**

All applications – online or paper – require a transcript request form. This gives Marian Catholic High School permission to send your transcript to a college. If there are no print-outs from an online application, you are still required to complete a transcript request form. **THIS IS A MUST!** To complete a transcript request form, it must have your signature, the date that you bring your application to the Guidance, the school you wish a transcript to be sent to, and the \$2 transcript fee. If you applied online, please check "online" on the transcript request form. **We cannot send any transcript unless we receive a completed transcript request form from the student.** Incomplete applications will be referred back to the student before processing.

Once an application is given to the College Counselor, it is checked for completeness and a final look at the college essay, if applicable. Then an official transcript, and any required counselor/teacher recommendations, will be attached. A completed application may include additional forms, such as completed teacher recommendations, completed teacher recommendation pages from an online application, counselor recommendation pages, personal statements, essays or any other information that needs to be included with the application.

The application will then be mailed by Marian. Postage will be paid by Marian. **Please do not put a return address on any envelope that is turned in with an application.**

Please be aware of the deadline for the application you are turning in. To assure that your application reaches the college by the college's deadline or priority filing date, applications should be turned in to your college counselor by the following dates:

Early Decision/Early Action	October 1
State Universities	October 15
Private Colleges and Universities	November 1

We will mail the completed college application packet for you as quickly as possible. With the volume of applications that we process in October and November, we cannot be held responsible for postmarks on any application that we mail which we receive after the dates mentioned above.

If an application requires a teacher letter of recommendation, complete the Teacher Letter of Recommendation Form (avail-

able in the College Room). Give the completed request form to the teacher **at least three weeks** before you expect the letter to be ready. If the application has teacher forms, give them to the teacher – do not turn them in with the application. If an application requires a counselor letter of recommendation, complete the Counselor Letter of Recommendation Form (available in the College Room). Give the completed request form to your college counselor **at least three weeks** before you expect the letter to be ready. Schedule an appointment to meet with your college counselor before he/she writes the letter.

COUNSELOR / TEACHER LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Generally, college applications indicate if a letter of recommendation is necessary. Students applying to highly selective and selective colleges need at least one letter of recommendation. Usually when a letter is required, there will be a specific form for the teacher(s) and for the College Counselor to complete. Students **who do not meet admission requirements** also need letters of recommendation to accompany their application.

Choose teachers whom you have had in an **ACADEMIC** subject – English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Foreign Language – during your junior or senior year. This doesn't mean that you ask the teacher from whom you received an "A" in their class. A "C" in Chemistry AP may have been the result of enormous determination and effort. Some applications require teachers from a specific academic discipline to write a letter.

Sometimes the teacher who knows you best is a club moderator or coach who may not have had you as a student. Activity moderators/coaches may be asked to write supplemental letters, but their letter should not take the place of an academic teacher's letter.

TO HOW MANY COLLEGES SHOULD I APPLY?

There is not a correct answer to this question. At Marian over the last few years, the average number of applications that a student sends has been four. There is little advantage to applying to an excessive number of colleges, especially because application fees can be costly.

However, it is important to apply to colleges with varying degrees of admission selectivity. It is recommended that every student apply to a "reach" school and a "safety" school. "Reach" schools are usually the most selective among the student's choices and often represent the student's first choice. "Reach" might also refer to the cost of the college: "If we don't get enough financial aid the cost for this college is out of our reach." Generally, looking at the numbers – GPA, class rank, and test scores – set the standard for an appropriate "reach" school. Also remember that there is a subjective factor as well in college admissions. Many private schools (including Catholic colleges and universities) are willing to work with you, academically and financially.

"Safety" schools are those that usually admit students with profiles like yours. While this school may not have all the qualities that you want in a college, the question is – Can you imagine yourself really attending this college and being happy? If the answer is "yes," you have a "safety" school.

For financial reasons, applying to a state university is also recommended. If one's financial aid package is inadequate, the cost of a state school is often more affordable than a private school. Sometimes even an out-of-state state school is still within the affordable price range.

ADMISSION OPTIONS

Non-Restrictive Application Plans - Students are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider their options and confirm enrollment.

Early Action (EA) — Students apply early in the senior year and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. If accepted, the student is not obligated to attend that institution but can bank this admission and still apply to other colleges during the regular admission cycle.

Regular Decision – Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time, usually by April 1st.

Rolling Admissions — Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render admissions decisions throughout the admission cycle.

Restrictive Application Plans – Students are responsible for determining and following restrictions.

Restrictive Early Action (REA) – Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED or EA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, students have until May 1 to confirm.

Early Decision (ED) — Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early. Sometimes, confused with Early Action, the Early Decision plan allows students to apply to an institution early in the senior year, also between October 30 and January 15, and request an early notification of admission. The student and guidance counselor sign a contract with the school at the time of application that indicates that if accepted, the student is obligated to attend that institution. Some colleges and universities offer both ED and EA options.

Priority Deadline – May be used by a college/university that has a set deadline or uses rolling admissions. Applications received after the deadline are usually considered on a space-available basis. Applications received after a priority deadline may not be eligible for merit scholarship consideration.

Open Admissions — An admission policy that does not subject applicants to a review of their academic qualifications. Many public junior/community colleges admit students under this guideline - that is, any student with a high school diploma or its equivalent is admitted.

ADMISSION DECISIONS

Admit/Accept — You're in! You are being offered admissions to the college.

Deny — You are not in. The decision is made by the college or university admissions committee.

Review/Under consideration – The admissions office is reviewing your application. You have not been accepted or denied. You will be notified of the decision later, usually in February.

Wait list — You are not in yet but have been placed on a waiting list in case an opening becomes available. Schools rank their wait list in order of priority, and unfortunately, the more competitive schools have years when they never draw from their wait lists. After a certain time, a rejection notice is sent.

TYPES OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

HIGHLY SELECTIVE COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES

Highly competitive colleges are typically those that describe their admissions policies and standards as “most difficult,” “very difficult,” or “highly selective”. The large majority of these schools are private, although some, such as the University of Michigan or University of Virginia are public. Most often, these schools are small to mid-sized. While many other characteristics may vary from campus to campus, the defining characteristic of these schools is the selectivity of their admissions practices. Keep in mind that a highly competitive college denies admission to students who are as well qualified as those it admits. Highly selective colleges usually have great interest in enrolling a class with broad socioeconomic, ethnic, geographic, and personal diversity.

During the school year, the college counselors offer two presentations about applying to highly selective colleges and universities and elaborate on the above topics. A presentation for parents is held during Parent-Teacher Conferences in November. A presentation for the students is in March - students come to the College Room during their study period.

LARGE STATE SCHOOLS

A large state school is typically one that enrolls 9,000 or more students, is publicly funded, and offers both undergraduate and graduate work. Often, state school campuses are big. They can span acres or actually be considered a town within themselves (i.e. the University of Illinois or the University of Iowa). Diversity is one of the factors for which many large state schools are known.

For admission requirements for state universities in Illinois or Indiana, consult each university's website.

SMALL LIBERAL ARTS SCHOOLS

Typically, small schools are characterized by their size, somewhere between 500 and 3,000 students. Naturally, because of the smaller number of students, the campuses of the small liberal arts schools will also be small. There is a range in selectivity in admissions policies, from least difficult to most difficult. In addition, there is a range of locales, from rural areas to suburban and city locations. For example, St. Michael's College in Vermont is located in a rural area, while St. Edward's University is located in the heart of Austin, Texas.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

There are many religious institutions across the United States. Religious colleges can be found in rural, suburban and urban locations. Many of the colleges and universities of all faiths take great pride in the fact that they emphasize teaching and learning over research. Professors at religious schools tend to focus their attention on students both in and out of the classroom. Examples of religious schools are Loyola and DePaul in Chicago, Pepperdine in California, and Dayton in Ohio.

SPECIAL INTERESTS – Visual Arts

Students interested in studying visual arts can do so in divisions of universities or at institutions dedicated to the study of art. They may choose between a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) degree, which is the professional degree for artists or a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) / Bachelor of Science (B.S.), which are liberal arts degrees.

In a B.F.A. degree program, the student's course work will be approximately two-thirds art & design and one-third liberal arts. In addition to a major in art, the student will be able to specialize in a field of interest, such as painting or graphic design. The B.F.A. is offered by independent art schools, such as the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as by universities like DePaul and the University of Illinois.

The B.A. or B.S degree places greater emphasis on liberal arts and is usually offered at comprehensive colleges and universities. An art major in these schools will be more generalized; the student's course work will be about one-third art courses with two-thirds liberal arts.

A student interested in majoring in Art should be aware of the differences between these two types of programs. There are advantages and disadvantages in both types. If your student is considering an art school, he/she will be expected to submit a portfolio of his/her work. Go to www.npda.org for more information about National Portfolio Days.

SPECIAL INTERESTS - Performing Arts

Students interested in pursuing a career in the performing arts (music, dance, theater) have the option of attending a conservatory or majoring in the specific art at a liberal arts college. The difference in focus of the course work between B.F.A. and B.A. /B.S. programs is the same as it is for Visual Arts majors. An audition will be expected for any student seeking admission to a major in performing arts.

Each fall, there is a Visual and Performing Arts College Fair held in the Chicago area. Students interested in these majors are encouraged to attend this fair. Date, time, and location will be announced on Marian's website.

SPECIAL INTERESTS - Playing a sport in college

There are three associations that govern the majority of intercollegiate athletics: the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). The NCAA governs three different levels of intercollegiate sports: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I schools are the most athletically competitive – all but 18 of the over 300 colleges at this level offer scholarships. Division II colleges also offer scholarships. Division III colleges are smaller in size, do not offer scholarships, and tend to be more academically selective. Colleges at the NAIA level are small in size and tend to be less competitive, but do offer scholarships. Finally, the National Junior College Athletic Association oversees competition between two-year colleges.

Division I

To be eligible to play, a student will need to present 16 core courses in the following breakdown:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher)
- 2 years of natural/physical science (one must be a lab science)
- 1 year of additional English, math or science
- 2 years of social studies
- 4 years of additional core courses (from any area listed above, or from foreign language, non-doctrinal religion or philosophy)

Division II

To be eligible to play, a student will need to present 14 core courses in the following breakdown:

- 3 years of English
- 2 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher)
- 2 years of natural/physical science (one must be a lab science)
- 2 year of additional English, math or science
- 2 years of social studies
- 3 years of additional core courses (from any area listed above, or from foreign language, non-doctrinal religion or philosophy)

More information about eligibility requirements may be found at the NCAA web site – www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. After the completion of junior year, students must complete the NCAA Clearinghouse Form. When students register to take the ACT or SAT during junior and senior year, they should request that their test score be sent to the Clearinghouse by listing 9999 in the college code section of the registration form each time they take the test. After you have registered online, print and bring Copy 1 and Copy 2 to Guidance in order to send the required transcripts to the NCAA.

Division III

The NCAA does not set academic eligibility requirements to play at the Division III level. If a student is eligible for admission to the college or university itself, they are eligible to play.

The [Guide for the College Bound Athlete](#) may be downloaded at the NCAA Clearinghouse web site.

For complete information about competing at the NAIA level, consult the eligibility requirements at the NAIA web site – www.naia.org.

COLLEGE TESTING

In addition to the ACT and SAT, the College Board and ACT are responsible for administering a number of tests that are associated with college admissions.

PLAN – a practice test for the ACT that also provides information to assist students with their career and college planning. Students take this in October of their sophomore year.

PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) - a practice test for the SAT which is also used to determine National Merit Semifinalists. Students take this in October of their junior year.

ACT – a college entrance exam that's generally taken during junior and/or senior year.

SAT Reasoning Test - a college entrance exam that's generally taken during junior and/or senior year.

SAT Subject Tests – one-hour tests that measure a student's knowledge in specific subject areas. These tests are required by some of the more selective colleges.

AP Tests (Advanced Placement) – tests that are taken at the completion of an advanced placement course. A student may gain college credit depending on their performance on the test.

For more information on these tests, go to:

ACT – www.actstudent.org SAT – www.collegeboard.com.

MARIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL CODE FOR ALL COLLEGE TESTING IS 141393.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ACT AND SAT?

How they are scored

The ACT has four sections: English, Reading, Math, and Science Reading. You are given a score (1–36) for each test; the four scores are then averaged to arrive at a Composite score between 1 and 36. Since there is no penalty for guessing on the ACT, you should attempt to answer every question.

The SAT has three sections, Critical Reading, Writing, and Math, with scores ranging from 200 to 800 for each section. The three scores are then added together, with the highest possible score being 2400. Since there is a slight penalty for wrong answers on the SAT, you should leave a question blank if you have no idea what the answer is. If you can eliminate one or more of the answer choices, you may make an “educated guess.”

How test scores are reported

When you register for both tests, you have the option of having your score sent directly to colleges. You may opt not to send scores to colleges until you have seen your score first. There is no "right" choice regarding this. There is one noticeable difference between how ACT and SAT scores are reported when you have taken either test multiple times. With the ACT, you may choose to report only your highest score to the college(s). With the SAT, all scores are sent to a college. Check with the college on how they use multiple test scores.

How to prepare for the ACT and SAT

Both the ACT and SAT provide test preparation on their respective web sites, which are mentioned earlier in this section. In addition, here are other options for test preparation:

- 1) the free booklet distributed by ACT and SAT that is part of the registration packet
- 2) test preparation manuals
- 3) computer software
- 4) online websites
- 5) classes or individual tutoring.

Which of these is the best way to prepare for the ACT or SAT? There is no "right" answer to that question. That depends on the individual student, but all students should prepare.

There will be classes offered at Marian, beginning in February. Information on these classes is distributed to Juniors through their English class in December.

DO I TAKE THE ACT OR THE SAT REASONING?

Counselors are often asked whether a student should take the ACT, the SAT, or both. Performing well on the ACT and SAT often depends on what kind of test taker a student is. The following is a comparison of the two tests as well as the skills that students need for each test.

VERBAL

The ACT tests a student's understanding of standard written English through sentence- and paragraph-correction questions (grammar & punctuation) based on reading passages; the SAT does not.

READING

On the ACT Reading Comprehension Section, students are given four reading passages. Students who are quantitative thinkers might be more comfortable with the ACT; students who are good at interpretation will do well on the SAT.

On the new SAT Critical Reading section (once known as the Verbal section), students will read short reading passages along with the existing long reading passages. Analogies will be eliminated, but sentence-completion questions will remain.

MATH

Both exams test students on the arithmetic, algebra, and geometry they've learned in high school.

The ACT math includes trigonometry; graphs and equations of circles, ellipses, and parabolas; and the quadratic formula. Questions often require students to recall a concept or a formula.

The SAT includes expanded math topics, such as exponential growth, absolute value, and functional notation, and places a greater emphasis on such other topics as linear functions, manipulations with exponents, and the properties of tangent lines. Quantitative comparisons have been eliminated.

Both tests permit students to use a calculator.

SCIENCE REASONING

The ACT contains the Science Reasoning Test, which covers the use of data representation, research summaries, and conflicting viewpoints in the natural sciences; the SAT does not.

WRITING

For the SAT, all students will be asked to write an essay that requires them to take a position on an issue and use examples to support their position. The essay section will assess students' ability to write on demand and understands that it will not be a students' polished final draft.

The ACT writing test is *optional*. Marian strongly recommends that students take the writing test. The ACT Writing test will compliment the English test. The combined information from both tests will tell postsecondary institutions about students' understanding of the conventions of standard written English and their ability to produce a direct sample of writing.

STRUCTURE

The test questions on the SAT get increasingly harder within each section. Test questions are random on the ACT. The ACT is all multiple-choice. The SAT has "student-produced response" mathematics questions. The SAT has one experimental section that does not count toward your score; the ACT does not. Both tests are about three and one-half hours long.

The ACT has 215 questions while the SAT has about 140, meaning that you will have less average time to spend on each question on the ACT.

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

One question college counselors often hear is "Should I apply to a college I know I (we) can't afford"? Our answer is a resounding YES! You don't know for certain that you can't afford it. Parents and students are looking at the "Sticker Price" of a college when they ask this question. The "sticker price" includes the total cost to attend a particular school before financial aid is awarded. What your actual cost will be won't be determined until after you have applied for financial aid in January of senior year. If you don't qualify for enough financial aid, the "sticker price" of most colleges and universities isn't affordable. Applying to college takes place in the first semester of senior year. This means you won't know how much financial aid you qualify for until February or March of senior year. So you shouldn't cross a college or university off of your list because of the sticker price before you know what your actual price will be. Your first concern is to select a college(s) that you feel comfortable at and have a good chance to be accepted.

Families often worry about the cost of college and the availability of financial aid for college because they believe the myths that they have heard about financial aid. The problem with myths is that they aren't true. Here are some of the most common myths.

- **YOU SHOUDN'T EVEN CONSIDER YOUR FIRST-CHOICE SCHOOL IF IT COSTS TOO MUCH.** Generally, the higher the total school costs, the easier it is to demonstrate eligibility for financial aid. Also, the sticker price at a school can be deceiving; aid is often available to offset some of the costs.
- **YOU OR YOUR PARENTS CAN'T GET ANY FINANCIAL AID BECAUSE YOUR FAMILY INCOME IS TOO HIGH.** Income is only one of the criteria on which financial aid is based. If the school's costs exceed your family's means, you may qualify for some form of financial aid. There are also some scholarships that are based on merit.
- **THERE IS NOT AS MUCH FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE AS THERE USED TO BE.** In fact, there is now more financial aid available. Margaret Spelling, the Secretary of Education reports that "Funds for college are at historic highs. In 2006 the Department of Education will make or guarantee more than \$60 billion in low-cost student loans, a \$4 billion increase over 2005 levels. Overall, \$82 billion in grants, loans, and other assistance are expected to benefit more than 10 million students – 413,000 more than last year."
- **MILLIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP DOLLARS GO UNCLAIMED EVERY YEAR.** The statement that private scholarship dollars go unclaimed is unfounded. This is what professional scholarship search services would like you to believe. That way they can get you to pay for their services when you can search for scholarships for free using services such as FAST-WEB.COM and COLLEGEANSWER.COM. More on searching for scholarships later on.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FINANCIAL AID

You will apply for financial aid in January of senior year completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). About a month after completing and returning the FAFSA, you will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). Then you will know your family's Expected Family Contribution (EFC). All of this information is forwarded to the college who then determine your financial aid package. The EFC remains the same for every college, no matter what the actual cost is. Your Financial Need at a college is determined by subtracting the EFC from the cost of the college.

For example: assume your EFC is calculated at \$10,000 and two schools you are considering are

College X - cost	\$25,000	College Y - cost	\$15,000
EFC	<u>-\$10,000</u>	EFC	<u>-\$10,000</u>
Your Financial Need is	\$15,000		\$ 5,000

After your financial need is determined, you will receive a financial aid package that typically consists of three types of need-based assistance: grants, loans and work-study. The majority of financial aid comes from one or more of the following: the federal government, state government and the college. In addition, a student may receive assistance in the form of scholarships.

Grants and scholarships are gift money and do not have to be repaid. Most grants are based on need. Scholarships may be awarded based on MERIT or NEED. Merit scholarships are awards given based on academic success or special talents and are usually not determined by the financial need of the family. A small percentage of scholarships come from private sources other than the college.

Loans are borrowed money that must be repaid. There are a number of available loan programs with a variety of repayment options.

Work-study involves a campus job, usually arranged through the financial aid office.

Marian Catholic offers two financial aid programs to assist families in understanding financial aid. The first program is in December and features speakers from a college. It is designed to walk families through the financial aid process. The second program is in February and assists families in completing the FAFSA online. Dates for these programs will be announced in the Guidance Newsletter and Family Connection.

The last page of this Guide lists web sites where you may find additional information on financial aid.

APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Remember the myth mentioned earlier that millions of scholarship dollars go unclaimed every year? Or perhaps you've heard stories about outstanding students who can't get scholarships? While it is true that there are thousands of scholarships out there, most of these scholarships have very specific eligibility criteria (e.g., a student must go to ABC college, have an ACT of 28+, and be in the top 5% of his/her class, belong to a particular ethnic group, race, or religion, have leadership ability, a specific major, or have overcome a great hurdle, etc.).

When it comes to merit/academic scholarships, students generally must have an outstanding GPA (3.5 or better), high ACT/SAT scores (ACT 27+ / SAT 1800+), and excellent recommendations. For most scholarships, applicants are also expected to be involved in extracurricular and/or community activities. To receive an athletic or talent scholarship, a student must **truly be outstanding**.

While it is not easy to obtain academic and talent scholarships, students who are willing to invest the time and energy sometimes find that their efforts are rewarded. Here are some tips for looking for scholarships:

- 1) Start early. Complete a scholarship search on the web during your junior year. This will allow you to be ready to complete applications in senior year. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL SENIOR YEAR TO COMPLETE THIS SEARCH.**
- 2) While private organizations and groups offer numerous scholarships, the best sources for scholarships are the colleges and universities themselves. Ask about scholarships when you visit a college or contact the school's financial aid office about scholarships. Ask - Is there a separate application or are you automatically considered for available scholarships just by applying for admission?
- 3) Private colleges often have more available scholarships than public colleges. Don't rule out a private college until you have seen their financial aid package.
- 4) Check for local scholarships (Chamber of Commerce, VFW, etc.) These are generally for smaller amounts, but the competition may not be as great. When we receive information about scholarships from local groups, we publish the information in Family Connection. Check the scholarship list in Family Connection regularly.
- 5) If you enjoy writing, look for scholarships that require an essay. As a rule, they do not receive as many applications.
- 6) Avoid the commercial scholarship searches. They are seldom worth the money because you can do the same work on your own, and many are scams.

SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR

How can you tell a legitimate program from a scam? According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), there are six phrases commonly used to lure in unwitting parents and students:

1. This scholarship is guaranteed or your money back.
2. You can't get this information anywhere else.
3. May I have your credit card/bank account number to hold this scholarship for you?
4. We'll do all the work.
5. The scholarship will cost some money.
6. You've been selected by a "national foundation" to receive a scholarship. For just a small handling fee, we can send you the check.

In general, be wary of scholarships with an application fee, scholarship matching services who guarantee success, advance-fee loan scams, and sales pitches disguised as financial aid "seminars."

For complete information about scholarship scams, go to the Federal Trade Commission's website – www.ftc.gov.

For free scholarship searches on the Web, we recommend www.fastweb.com or www.collegeanswer.com. You do not have to wait until senior year to begin your search for scholarships.

SUMMARY

Please keep this College Planning Guide for reference during the next three years. It provides basic information about the college search and application process for the questions that will come up along the way.

Register for Family Connection – it will provide invaluable assistance in the college search/application process.

The Internet is another place to go when you need more in-depth answers to your questions. The last page of this guide lists places to start "surfing the web" for college information.

There will also be opportunities to ask questions over the course of the next three years. Guidance counselors and college counselors will address particular questions/topics as they arise. In addition, there are evening presentations for parents throughout the school year and nights when the Benish College Room is available for parents.

Please do not hesitate to ask for assistance as you focus on making "choices" for future success.

The Marian Catholic Guidance Department

Mr. Gerry O'Brien, Director
Mr. Ron Centanni
Mrs. Danielle DeGraaf
Mrs. Laura Docherty
Mrs. Jessica Gehm
Mrs. Mary Juraska
Mrs. Johanna LaBelle
Mr. Michael Rodewald
Mr. Ron Unavitch

SITES ON THE INTERNET

Family Connection - tcci.naviance.com/marianchs

WHAT CAREERS CAN I GO INTO WITH A COLLEGE MAJOR IN ...?

Check the following sites for career information

www.wisemantech.com/guidance/careerspecific.htm

www.kstate.edu/acic/career/options.html

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGE TESTING?

ACT www.actstudent.org

SAT www.collegeboard.com

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT TEST PREP?

www.review.com

www.kaplan.com

www.petersons.com

www.number2.com (free test prep on this site)

www.4tests.com (free test prep on this site)

www.educate.com – Sylvan Learning

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS?

www.fafsa.ed.gov - financial aid forms online

www.fastweb.com - scholarship search and financial aid information

www.collegeanswer.com - scholarship search and financial aid information

www.finaid.org - information on different areas of financial aid

www.salliemae.com - the nation's leading provider of education funding

If you are a resident of **ILLINOIS**, go to www.collegezone.com for information about programs for residents of Illinois if you attend a college or university in Illinois

If you are a resident of **INDIANA**, go to www.in.gov/ssaci for information about programs for residents of Indiana if you attend a college or university in Indiana.

WHERE CAN I FIND THE WEB ADDRESS FOR A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY?

In Family Connection or at www.allaboutcollege.com

WEBSITES FOR INFORMATION ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COLLEGE:

www.collegeview.com

www.collegenet.com

www.schoolsintheusa.com

www.privatecolleges.com

www.supercollege.com

www.ctcl.com (colleges that change lives)

www.campustours.com

www.petersons.com

www.collegesofdistinction.com

www.catholiccollegesonline.org

www.hbcu-central.com

WEBSITES FOR INFORMATION ON ATHLETICS:

www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

www.naia.org

