

THE APPLICATION PROCESS PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Ethics

When a student signs their name to an application, they are warranting that all of the information is true and that the application and essays were written by the student. As parents, be careful not to provide so much assistance that the application loses its authenticity and bridges this ethical standard. Colleges are very wary of applications that come across a little too “polished.”

Tips

- 6 – 8 college applications represent a healthy range.
- Unfortunately, each college has its own way of handling its admission procedures and they can be very different. It is important to reference the undergraduate admission requirements for each and every college. All instructions should be read carefully.
- Students should have an objective adult review their application. They may pick up something that they have missed. Their College Counselor is willing to be that adult!
- All applications should be printed out or photocopied before being sent!

APPLICATION FILING TYPES

Regular Decision

Most colleges have a particular deadline for the receipt (or postmarking) of applications; ranging from December 15 to April 1. In this type of admission plan, the college informs applicants any time before April 15 and the student is asked to respond to their offer of acceptance by May 1 (known as the Candidate Reply Date).

Rolling Admission

Candidates’ credentials are reviewed in the order in which they are submitted and candidates are notified of decisions in a relatively short time. In general, the more academically successful students are, the earlier they hear of their acceptances. Colleges with rolling admissions start sending their acceptances early in the academic year and this may cause them to become more competitive as the year progresses so it is to the student’s advantage to apply as early as possible. This is particularly true of many state universities (outside

of California) that use this plan. These colleges still honor the May 1 Candidate Reply Date, however.

Early Decision

A relatively few number of colleges have this option which involves a contractual agreement between the student and the college. The admissions committee will review the student's application earlier than those applying by the regular deadline and the committee will inform the student of its decision, generally before Christmas. In turn, if the student is admitted, they are obliged to attend the college and must not file (or must withdraw) all other college applications. A student may only submit one Early Decision application. The College Counseling office will only send transcripts to one Early Decision school as it is considered unethical to do otherwise.

Early Action

This plan is similar to Early Decision, but without an obligatory attendance commitment. It is much more student friendly since a student learns of either his acceptance or deferral (when a new decision will be made during the regular decision time) earlier than others, but does not need to tell the college of his or her decision until the May 1 deadline.

Early Action, Single Choice

This plan is a new one and several schools have jumped on board this option. It is like Early Decision in that students must agree to only apply to one Early Action school, but it is also like Early Action in that students may apply Regular or Rolling Decision (or even Early Decision) to other schools and make their final enrollment decision by the May 1 deadline. In other words, they are not locked in to attend this school, although they will receive an early reply to their application.

APPLICATION TYPES

Common Application

The Common Application is used at over 200 selective, independent college and universities. Many of these institutions use this form exclusively. All give equal consideration to the Common Application and to the college's own form. However, if a Senior used the Common Application, they must be aware of any supplementary forms the college wants included in order to complete the

Common Application. The Common Application form can be found at www.commonapp.org.

Electronic Applications

Most colleges prefer on-line applications to the paper versions, although most will accept either. In any case, students should always keep a copy of the applications submitted along with the confirmation of receipt of that application.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Essays and Short Answers

The essay is an important part of the application for many colleges. For others, it is not even a part of the application (for instance, Cal States and several other out-of-state, state universities). It is critical that a student use this opportunity to express his or her own voice. Although a fine essay would never override a weak academic profile, it can be a tipping point for students on the cusp of admission. In any event, the essay should reflect a student's best efforts and reveal their best writing style. It should be edited more than once and be free from all grammatical and stylistic errors. English teachers and College Counselors are willing participants in helping students to compose a compelling and unique essay.

Extracurricular Activities

Often students have compiled a long list of activities that do not readily fit into the available application space. Unless requested otherwise, students should rank their activities by importance beginning with those with which they have spent the most time and effort. Do not "pad" the list with those activities that are either dormant or insignificant. Students should be careful to accurately estimate their hours of involvement as too often quick addition reveals that students don't have time for school due to the time consumed by their extracurricular activities!

Secondary School Reports

Most colleges (but NOT the UCs and the Cal States) require a package of material from the high school in order to complete the college applications. Forms for these purposes are called the Secondary School Reports and the Mid-Year School Reports. Seniors should accumulate all of these school forms in an

organized fashion and fill out the top portion of the forms and give them to their assigned Counselor. We will then attach it to our own Secondary School Report form for each individual senior, the School Letter of Recommendation, a high school transcript and a School Profile. Once prepared and signed, the mail date is entered into our database so that we can keep track of when and where it was sent. Last year we sent approximately 1000 application packages prior to February 1! Many times colleges will notify a student that they have not yet received a transcript, when, in fact, it is simply sitting in their unopened mail. We can verify when each SSR package has been sent and, 9 times out of 10, they do find it when called to verify receipt. All colleges – except UCs and Cal States – would like to receive high school transcripts after the 7th semester grades have been published. It is that last piece of information that can “cinch” a positive decision or tip the balance toward a rejection. In order to send all of these components to the application we MUST have a parent authorization form that gives us permission to send the personal information listed above.

Teacher Recommendations

Some colleges do not accept ANY letters of recommendations (like the UCs and the Cal States). Most colleges require one from a teacher. A few colleges want two teacher recommendations (and they usually draw from specific academic disciplines). A number of colleges – particularly Christian colleges – want letters of recommendation from a youth pastor or someone who has had a spiritual impact on a student. When considering whom to ask for a letter, it is important for a student to ask the question, “Which teacher knows my work and knows me well enough to make a positive evaluation?”

Teachers always have the right to say “No” to a student who requests a letter (although we’re confident they would be gracious). Parents should be aware that certain teachers do a LOT of letters of recommendation and they have to do these letters on their own time, outside of their daily teaching obligations. Because these letters take time and care to do, it is critical that Seniors request a letter at least 3 weeks in advance of the application deadline. It is also imperative that Seniors be organized in their request and supply teachers with all of their needed letters at the same time (if possible) and accompany the request with a stamped, pre-addressed envelope, using the Oaks Christian return address. Seniors are asked to place all of the paperwork in a large manilla envelope and write the colleges and their deadlines on the outside. Most teachers compose their own letters of recommendation and do not fill out

the form supplied by the college, but rather attach that form to the recommendation. However, the top of the form should still be filled out by the student. Students should graciously follow-up with their written request to determine if the recommendations were sent and, of course, they should always write a thank you note in response to the teacher's efforts.

Helpful Hints:

Academic recommendations should be written by teachers who have taught the student recently (preferably no earlier than the Junior year), and who knows the student well. If there is someone in the community with whom the Senior is very close, they should ask that person to write a separate, personal recommendation on their own letterhead.

If a senior needs two letters of recommendation, then he or she should try to balance their academic profile by having a recommendation from the Humanities Department as well as one from the Math or Science Departments. Please do not have students request letters from teachers if they are not necessary. Teachers do not have excess time to write supplemental letters and colleges are not inclined to read these letters!

If your child has struggled in a particular discipline over the years, but has worked hard to improve and has impressed a teacher or two along the way, then this could be a good teacher to ask for a letter. A teacher can help an Admissions Committee to understand a mediocre record in a subject matter and address the student's desire to rise to that challenge.