

# THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS

November 2020

Volume 28 Issue 3

## 6 COMMON COLLEGE ADMISSIONS MYTHS

*(Usnews.com)*

WHEN APPLYING TO college, many students think they know which strategies will help them attract the attention – in a good way – of admissions officers. But there's often a gap between perception and reality about what actually matters, and what matters most, when it comes to grades, test scores, extracurricular activities and other factors. Another promising and often misunderstood fact: It's not as difficult as many students think to get admitted to a college, beyond the most selective schools. On average, two-thirds of first-time freshman applicants were offered admission to a four-year school in the U.S., according to a 2019 report from the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

**Myth 1:** Getting All A's Is the Most Important Thing - Of course, your grades matter. But what that means depends on a given college's level of selectivity as well as the classes you took, based on the offerings at your high school.

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## CRAFTING AN UNFORGETTABLE COLLEGE ESSAY

*(princetonreview.com)*

Most selective colleges require you to submit an essay or personal statement as part of your application. It may sound like a chore, and it will certainly take a substantial amount of work. But it's also a unique opportunity that can make a difference at decision time. Admissions committees put the most weight on your high school grades and your test scores . However, selective colleges receive applications from many worthy students with similar scores and grades—too many to admit. So they use your essay, along with your letters of recommendation and extracurricular activities to find out what sets you apart from the other talented candidates.

So what does set you apart?

You have a unique background, interests and personality. This is your chance to tell your story (or at least part of it).

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## HOW TO ANSWER THE "WHY THIS COLLEGE" ESSAY

*(InternationalCollegeCounselors.com)*

One of the most common supplemental essay prompts asks some version of "Why do you want to attend this university?" Your essays help colleges evaluate your interest in their school, what they offer that matches what you want from your college education, whether you're a good fit for their community, and whether you'll be able to contribute to and enrich the school's learning environment inside and outside of the classroom.

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## SCHOLARSHIPS

### AXA ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP

\$1.4 million worth of scholarships available. Special consideration is given to achievements that empower society to mitigate risk through education and/or action in areas such as financial, environmental, health, safety and/or emergency preparedness. Deadline is December 14, 2020



### YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION

Instrumental/Vocal - The competition provides these talented young artists an opportunity to earn prestige, perform as soloists with the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus, serve as role models to their peers, and earn \$8000 in cash prizes. Deadline is December 15, 2020



### RON BROWN SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Offers four-year renewable awards for \$10,000 per year to African American high school seniors who plan to attend college full-time. Scholarship is based on financial need, academic achievement, essay, extracurricular activities, leadership experience, community service and recommendations. Early Deadline: January 9, 2021



### SBO SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY CONTEST

Answer in 250 words (or less): How has playing an instrument changed for you during the pandemic? TEN \$1,000 scholarships awarded in two categories. Deadline is December 31, 2020










### MOST VALUABLE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

The Elks National Foundation will award 500 four-year scholarships to the highest-rated applicants in the 2021 competition. You do not need to be a member of the Elks to apply. Deadline November 15th 2020



## SENIOR CHECKLIST

-  File the FAFSA, deadline Nov. 30th
-  Register for the SAT or ACT
-  Start working on your admissions essays
-  Ask teachers for recommendations
-  UC Application Deadline is November 30th
-  CSU Application Priority Deadline is November 30th
-  Register for the Common Application
-  Check out the newer Coalition Application

**FUN FACT**  
33% of US Colleges offer Rolling Admissions

### EDUCATION MATTERS SCHOLARSHIP

The Education Matters Scholarship is giving you the chance to state why education matters. One applicant will be awarded \$5,000 scholarship. Deadline: November 30, 2020



## HOW TO ANSWER THE "WHY THIS COLLEGE" ESSAY

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Imagine you're an admissions reader reviewing yet another essay from an applicant who wants to go to NYU or Columbia because they love New York City or a student who wants to attend Villanova or Duke because they want to cheer on their favorite basketball team.

What sets you apart? What can you offer the college that no other applicant can?

**Every essay is an opportunity to highlight you!** Talk about an experience related to what you plan to study. If you plan to major in business, start off describing a work experience or a leadership role you had in this area. Say what your experience taught you about yourself and your undergraduate and career goals.

**Research what you plan to study.** Mention specific majors, minors, concentrations, or however else they define the degree. If you are applying undecided, it's still a good idea to mention specific areas of study you might like to explore. Read the school's website - are there specific classes or professors that interest you? Is there a way you can participate in a specific professor's research?

**Read about the programs/activities/student organizations.** Schools want to know that you have intellectual curiosity and that their programs/ activities/ organizations will help expand your knowledge. Read through the school's websites - are there particular programs that you want to join? Or if there isn't a particular club or program, can you possibly develop that activity on campus?

**Be specific.** Do not laundry list all the great things about the school. A few really meaningful reasons that resonate with your background, experiences, and goals will demonstrate in a more concrete way how and why you should become a part of the school community.

**Avoid statistics and rankings from the website.** The school does not need to know that it offers "50 majors and 35 minors." They already know that they are "ranked #4 in undergraduate journalism programs." Repeating information on the website doesn't explain why you want to attend.

**Cite faculty or alumni you've encountered.** If an admissions officer visited your school, you went on a campus tour, you took a summer class at the school, or you spoke with a faculty member on the phone, reference your experience with this person and how it impacted your feelings about the school. You can also mention alumni and their words of wisdom.

**Avoid generic statements.** Do not give broad statements about the school's "beautiful campus," "supportive career center," or "amazing study abroad programs." If you're going to discuss these statements, provide specifics.

**Mention their values.** Tulane emphasizes the importance of community service, while the University of Pennsylvania values an interdisciplinary education. If these values tie into your academic or extracurricular interests, use this opportunity to show how you are a great fit for their school.

**Reinforce interest.** Your essay should always make the school feel like your #1 choice. They want to know that if admitted, you will attend.

**Proofread.** If you are writing several of these essays, make sure to change the name of the school to which you're applying. Make sure that the school has the programs and offerings you're writing about. And don't misspell the name of the school!

**Remember**, the "Why this college" essay gives you an opportunity to show that you've done your research, that you know about the school's opportunities, and that you can offer something unique. We know you have a gem of an essay in you!

## COLLEGE NEWS

**Brigham Young University Idaho** released a campus update saying that the university is "troubled" by accounts that students have deliberately exposed themselves to COVID-19 in the hopes of selling plasma that contains antibodies for the disease.

**Chapman University** opened for in-person instruction for the first time this semester on October 22nd, The Orange County Register reported. Students have the option of returning or of continuing with online instruction. About 35 percent of students came back to campus for in-person learning.

**The University of Oregon and the city of Eugene** hosted a weeklong celebration in October for the opening of the 13th Avenue Bikeway, a two-way protected bike lane complete with 23 bike signals from Alder Street to Lincoln Street.

**Andrea Ghez, UCLA's Lauren B. Leichtman and Arthur E. Levine Professor of Astrophysics**, was awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in physics. Ghez shares half of the prize with Reinhard Genzel of UC Berkeley and the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics. The Nobel committee praised them for "the discovery of a supermassive compact object at the centre of our galaxy."

**California Community Colleges** announced it is receiving a \$100 million gift, the largest in the 116-school system's history. The donation will go toward emergency aid and scholarships for students.

## ODENZA MARKETING GROUP VOLUNTEER AWARD

If you have completed at least 50 volunteer hours, you are eligible for this award. Deadline is December 31st, 2021



## WASHINGTON STATE PTA SCHOLARSHIP

Three \$3,000 scholarships and one \$1,000 scholarship to graduating seniors from Washington state public high schools with an active PTA, who will be starting college (either two-year or four-year) in the fall. Applicants must have a current and verified GPA of at least 3.4 (on a scale of 4.0), name and number of the PTA/PTSA at your school and answer the essay question.

Application deadline is March 1, 2021




## KNIGHT ESSAY CONTEST

The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) invites all high school students (9th through 12th grades) interested in the American Revolution to participate in the George S. & Stella M. Knight Essay Contest. Deadline is December 31, 2020



## JUNIOR CHECKLIST



ACT - December 12th test date. You must register by November 6. It takes 30 minutes to complete registration and you will need a photo.



SAT - Next test date is December 5th. You must register by November 5th. Schedule virtual college visits



Take virtual college tours



Schedule virtual college visits



AP Exam date is May 3-7 and 10-14. Registration deadline is November 13th

## SCIENCE AMBASSADOR SCHOLARSHIP

A full-tuition scholarship for a woman in science, technology, engineering, or math. Funded by Cards Against Humanity. Applications close December 14th, 2020



## HOW TO ASK FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR COLLEGE

(usnews.com)

LETTERS OF recommendation from teachers, school counselors and other sources can help college admissions officers get a more complete picture of applicants. Letters of recommendation are one of the few ways to learn about prospective students beyond their grades and test scores. Obtaining high-quality letters of recommendation usually doesn't happen overnight – it's a process that takes time and planning.

It makes sense to ask for an additional letter of recommendation if it can tell the admissions committee something new about a student, says Steven Roy Goodman, an educational consultant and admissions strategist in the District of Columbia.

But admissions officers aren't necessarily going to be impressed by a higher number of recommendations.

Admissions officers generally want to see letters of recommendation from high school teachers and counselors.

Students should approach the instructors with whom they have the best relationships, experts say. Ideally, this is someone who knows them well and can speak to both their academic and personal strengths.

Students should also make sure they're asking recent teachers for recommendations, meaning those who taught them during the second half of high school, college admissions experts say. This is important because students change and grow during their high school years, and admissions offices want the most current insights available, experts say.

Diversity is an additional key consideration for students requesting multiple letters of recommendation. When students gather recommendations from teachers and others who know them in different capacities, that paints a fuller picture for admissions officers.

A student with a part-time job may consider asking his or her manager for a recommendation, or athletes may think about asking their coaches. Such recommenders may be able to discuss some of a student's strengths that aren't as evident in a classroom setting.

Students should request letters of recommendation well in advance of an application deadline. If a teacher or other adult agrees to write a recommendation, students should provide certain types of information that will aid both the recommender's memory and writing process and share application deadlines.

## 2 STUDENT TIPS FOR GETTING GREAT COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

(usnews.com)

ASKING FOR A recommendation letter can be an intimidating task for many college applicants. Regardless of whether you've selected three teachers or have no idea where to begin, the tips from students themselves below can help you approach this process efficiently and successfully.

**New York University junior Kirollos**

**Morkos** chose the latter strategy.

Morkos said he struggled in English class during his freshman year, but worked hard and ended up performing significantly better in his junior year – in front of the same teacher for both classes. "Clearly, I had grown a lot from when I was a freshman, and my English teacher saw that first-hand more than anybody else," he says. "Because of this, she was the perfect candidate to write my recommendation letter, even more so than the AP teachers in whose classes I got straight A's."

**Kenny Zesso, a junior at University of Notre Dame**, says he made sure he had his resume ready and prepared for his teachers if they requested it. Zesso said he also gave some additional thought to what message he could send college admissions staff with his specific selection of recommenders.



## 2 STUDENT TIPS FOR GETTING GREAT COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

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"I decided to ask a math, social studies/history and English teacher because I hoped to highlight my well-rounded curiosity," he says.

Zesso noted that these were also people with whom he had developed strong relationships during the course of his high school career.

**Old Dominion University senior Javan Tenemille** says he found it crucial to make sure he consistently, but politely, reminded his teachers about his letters.

"I knew I wasn't the only person trying to get a letter of recommendation from them, so I would just give them friendly reminders every week or so," he says. "I had one teacher who forgot all the way up until the deadline, then wrote one, then I had to express deliver it.

"Another tactic to remain confident and to avoid getting lost in the shuffle is to approach your teachers in a unique way when you ask for the letters in the first place. Instead of just sending an email, or asking the question and then simply leaving it at that, consider what Morkos did.

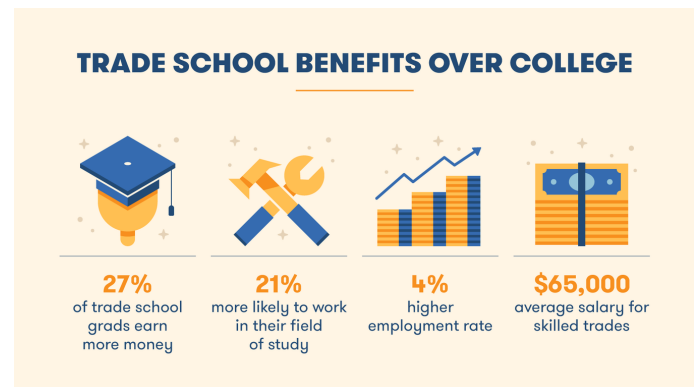
"I approached them after school, and we talked about my future goals. I gave them a feel of what I wanted to accomplish in college and what drives me to be successful. I also gave them some background into my interests and hobbies I enjoy outside of class," says Morkos. "It's important for the teacher to really understand you as a whole."

## COLLEGE vs. TRADE SCHOOL: WHICH CHOICE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

([thecollegepost.com](http://thecollegepost.com))

Real life starts after high school — or at least, professional life does. But while college may seem like the inevitable next step after your high school diploma, you shouldn't be blinded to the alternatives.

College or trade school?



Applying to universities can be stressful, and admission to a top-tier college is competitive. In comparison, you can produce your high school diploma at a trade school and sign up for the next available program.

A traditional college offers a four-year Bachelor's degree, followed by an optional Master's degree.

Meanwhile, trade schools offer certificates or diplomas that aren't equivalent to college degrees but are sufficient to get a job within a profession that recognizes the certification.

An undergraduate degree usually takes four years of study. On the other hand, trade schools take about half as much time to complete the program. They are generally intensive courses that can be completed in one to two years. And college is expensive.

College graduates earn around \$50,000 a year in their first job out of college, which is significantly more compared to the salaries of non-college graduates. However, trade schools allow you to start working sooner thanks to the shorter length of their programs which means you can start earning money sooner.

## CRAFTING AN UNFORGETTABLE COLLEGE ESSAY

*Continued from page 1*

The best way to tell your story is to write a personal, thoughtful essay about something that has meaning for you. Be honest and genuine, and your unique qualities will shine through.

Tips for a Stellar College Application Essay

- 1. Write about something that's important to you.**
- 2. Don't just recount—reflect!** Describe what you learned from the experience and how it changed you.
- 3. Being funny is tough.** A student who can make an admissions officer laugh never gets lost in the shuffle. But beware. What you think is funny and what an adult working in a college thinks is funny are probably different. We caution against one-liners, limericks and anything off-color.
- 4. Start early and write several drafts.** Set it aside for a few days and read it again. Put yourself in the shoes of an admissions officer: Is the essay interesting? Do the ideas flow logically? Does it reveal something about the applicant? Is it written in the applicant's own voice?
- 5. No repeats.** What you write in your application essay or personal statement should not contradict any other part of your application—nor should it repeat it. This isn't the place to list your awards or discuss your grades or test scores.
- 6. Answer the question being asked.** Don't reuse an answer to a similar question from another application.
- 7. Have at least one other person edit your essay.** A teacher or college counselor is your best resource. And before you send it off, check, check again, and then triple check to make sure your essay is free of spelling or grammar errors.

## COLLEGE NEWS

**USC** will distribute over \$1.3 million in grants to local nonprofits and community programs helping in the fight against issues caused by COVID-19.

Nationwide, an early snapshot shows undergraduate college enrollment is running 4% below last year's level, according to research by the National Student Clearinghouse. Public colleges are faring better the **University of Washington** recorded a slight uptick in the number of students, and **Washington State University** enrollment dropped by just 1.4%.

More than two dozen colleges and higher education groups, including **Stanford University and the University of Michigan**, are suing the federal government to stop changes to a key visa program for highly skilled workers.

**Students from immigrant families** accounted for 28 percent of all U.S. college students in 2018, up from 20 percent in 2000, according to a new analysis by the Migration Policy Institute commissioned The number of students from immigrant families -- those who were either born abroad or born in the U.S. to immigrant parents -- grew at a much faster rate than the number of U.S.-born students with U.S.-born parents.



## 6 COMMON COLLEGE ADMISSIONS MYTHS

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**Myth 2: Test Scores Can Make or Break Your Chances of Getting In-** Test scores are just one element of the application package.

**Myth 3: The More Clubs and Activities on Your Resume, the Better** - The quality of your involvement counts more than the quantity of your activities.

**Myth 4: You Should Ask for a Recommendation Only From a Teacher Who Gave You an A** - It's better to consider whether a teacher can help admissions officers get to know a different side of you and understand who you are.

**Myth 5: It's a Mistake to Get Creative With Your Essay** - Being clever and original can help you stand out from the crowd – but only if you can pull it off. The essay is your opportunity to connect and make an impression. And while you may be tempted to write about how the pandemic affected you and your family, consider that admissions officers will likely be inundated with essays on the topic.

**Myth 6: To Make Yourself Memorable, You Need to Visit the Campus.** Since the coronavirus brought visits to a screeching halt last spring, schools have introduced a wide range of virtual tools, from informal chats to tours that are meant to offer students a taste of campus life. Many competitive colleges are using these new options to gauge an applicant's "demonstrated interest."

### STOKES EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Interested in a career in computer science and national security? This \$30,000 a year scholarship plus guarantees you a job after college at Fort Meade, MD. Applications opens September 1st

APPLY  
HERE

### TOP TEN LIST SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship gives you the chance to show what's truly special and different about you for a chance to win a \$1,500 scholarship. Deadline: December 31, 2020

APPLY  
HERE

### OREGON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

One of the largest scholarship programs of its kind and serves Oregon students. Applications for hundreds of scholarships open November 2020. Deadline: March 1, 2021.

APPLY  
HERE

### HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION

Manages 70 of the largest need based scholarship opportunities in the country for high school seniors who have faced or overcome obstacles. Scholarships by state and by career.

APPLY  
HERE

### GENERATION GOOGLE SCHOLARSHIP

The Generation Google Scholarship was established to help aspiring students pursuing computer science degrees excel in technology and become leaders in the field. Deadline December 4, 2020

APPLY  
HERE