

Gladewater High School

Office of School Counseling

Senior College Planning Guide



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All of these sites below will give you almost any information that you might be looking for, a great place to get started.

Counselor's Corner Website: <http://www.sabineisd.org/Page/350>

www.facebook.com/bearscounselors

Twitter: @bearscounselors

www.pinterest.com/bearscounselors

Instagram: bearscounselors

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INTRODUCTION TO SENIOR YEAR COLLEGE INFORMATION

Welcome to your senior year! This booklet provides you with important instructions to complete the college application process. Please share it with our parents/guardians and keep it as a resource to use throughout the year. The booklet includes current and useful information for choosing and applying to college and financing the cost of college. Please pay close attention to deadlines. The colleges, school counseling office, and other organizations to which you may be submitting documents expect you to meet designated deadlines.

It is critical that you thoroughly discuss your post-graduate plans with your parents/guardians, teachers, school counselor, and others whose opinions you value. Communicate with your counselor on a regular basis so he/she can be of assistance with the process.

Your senior year of high school is important to the college admissions staff. They expect you to continue challenging yourself with rigorous courses and to continue participating in extracurricular activities and contributing to your community. Most of all, your grades should be as strong as possible. The admissions staff will review your mid-year and final transcript to ascertain your continued eligibility for admission to college.

The College Planning Calendar below is a good general plan of the application process. For a more detailed look into your senior year, please pick up a Grade 12 Information packet from your counselor.

COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

September

- Discuss your classes, college plans, & test scores with your school counselor.
- Activate Applytexas.org or CommonApp.org account. (Explained on page 9)
- Track important dates and deadlines. Stay organized. Set up a filing system.
- Arrange campus visits.
- Register to take the SAT/ACT.
- Search for scholarships & grants (an all-year process). Use free online search websites. See the list in this booklet.

October

- Request transcripts to be sent to colleges.
- Ask for letters of recommendation from school counselor, teachers, coaches, etc.
- Write college application essays.
- Complete early decision/early action applications. (Explained on page 7)
- Take SAT/ACT if needed.

November

- Continue completion of applications.
- Determine which financial aid forms the colleges to which you are applying require & complete as soon as they are available.
- Attend Financial Aid Nights and search for additional sources of financial aid.
- Take SAT/ACT again if needed.

December

- Complete college applications ideally by the winter break.
- Collect information needed to complete the FAFSA.
- Take SAT/ACT, if needed.
- Stay organized. Keep copies of all forms submitted by mail or online.
- Continue to track important dates and deadlines on your calendar.

January

- Submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible. Aid is often on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Fill out and submit colleges' required financial aid forms.
- When you have financial aid questions, contact the appropriate college FAO (financial aid office).

February–March

- College decision and financial award letters start rolling in. If you are denied admission or are wait listed, you can send a letter of appeal and offer additional achievement information.
- Arrange to have mid-year transcripts sent to colleges as needed.
- Make sure FAFSA has been submitted by March 1st.
- Check online for your Student Aid Report (SAR) from the FAFSA.
- Be sure to discuss any special circumstances affecting your family's financial situation with the financial aid office at the college you are planning to attend.
- Track important financial aid deadlines.
- Respond quickly to college requests for additional documentation.

April

- Carefully analyze your letters of acceptance and financial aid documents.
- Make a decision & send your deposit (most colleges ask for response by May 1st).
- Send a thank you letter to the colleges that you have been accepted to, but have decided not to attend, so they will be able to give your spot to someone on their waiting list.
- Carefully follow the directions in your acceptance letter (esp. important deadlines, instructions on housing, financial aid, orientation, etc.).

May

- Fill out the form provided by the school counseling office to specify which college should receive your final official transcript.
- Respond quickly to requests and return necessary forms—when in doubt contact the financial aid office (FAO).
- Notify your FAO of any additional funding you'll be receiving to pay for college (scholarships and loans, etc.).
- Evaluate student loan lenders and take time to understand student loans. Learn about borrowing responsibly.

RESEARCHING COLLEGES

Keep an open mind to the possibilities:

- Use college search websites available in the booklet to narrow the list to a manageable number of colleges.
- Colleges offer open house programs in the fall for seniors and their parents. Physically placing yourself on the campus and talking to staff and students gives you a better sense of yourself in that environment.
- You may also be able to schedule an interview to speak to an admissions representative. Make the appointment prior to the open house visit.
- Take a copy of your transcript with you to the interview.
- Take a copy of the "Questions To Ask On A College Visit", that is included in the booklet, with you to the open house program.
- There are also virtual tours and interactive communication sites with current students on the internet that can help in your search for the college that is the best fit for you.
- There are local College Fairs in the East Texas area and some at the larger high schools. Take this opportunity to visit with college representatives in person.
- Representatives from many colleges schedule visits to our school throughout the first semester and will be scheduled during lunch.

Things to Consider When Choosing a College

Academic program
Location (urban, suburban, rural)
Size (small, medium, large)
Extra-curricular activities
Housing accommodations
Dining provisions
Health and counseling services
Safety
Actual cost of attending
Diversity
Technology resources
Religious affiliation
Co-op, internships, or work-based experiential learning options
Job placement services for graduates

HELPFUL HINTS IN CHOOSING A COLLEGE

You want to select the college that will best satisfy your needs, interests, lifestyle, and personal and professional goals. A good "match" between you and your college will be the key to your success and happiness over the next four years. Establish with your parents the budget for application fees and only apply to colleges that you really would attend if accepted. To help you make that difficult final decision, the following "helpful hints" may assist you in determining which college is right for you.

1. Visit The Colleges

Juniors and Seniors are allowed two college visit days per year with an excused absence. Students must obtain a college visit form from the front office and obtain signature from the admissions representative from your visit.

Visit the colleges you are considering during a week when classes are in session. We recommend that you tour the campus, attend one or two classes, meet with the faculty in the department which interests you, eat in the dining hall, and, perhaps most importantly, talk with current students. Students are the best sources of information about the college; they will talk honestly and knowledgeably about the social life, academic program, and atmosphere on campus, dorm life, and other topics that are important to you. If possible, plan to spend one night in a college dormitory. It will enable you to communicate informally with students, get the "feel" of the campus, and "sample" life as a student. The Admissions Office at most colleges will arrange an overnight visit for you, either before or after acceptance. Remember that you are not just choosing a place to go to school; you are also choosing a home for the next four years. It should be a place where you feel comfortable, relaxed, involved, and challenged.

2. Consider Actual Cost Rather Than "Sticker Price."

Unfortunately, some students base their college choice on the "sticker price" - the full cost for tuition, fees, room and board - rather than on the *actual* cost of attending. Most colleges offer significant amounts of financial aid, including non-repayable grants, to students with demonstrated need. In addition, colleges frequently offer installment payment plans, low interest loans, academic scholarships, jobs on campus, and other forms of aid to students, irrespective of need. When all forms of aid are considered, a college education, either private or public, can be surprisingly affordable. Apply for aid (even if you don't think you qualify) and consider actual cost when making your final decision.

3. Out-of-State Fee Waivers

Texas does not participate in the **Academic Common Market** at the undergraduate (Bachelors level.) The ACM is a cooperative agreement among a consortium of 16 southern states allowing students to pursue out-of-state academic degree programs at the in-state tuition rate if the program of study does not exist in their state.) However, students may look into this for later graduate level (Masters or Doctorate) work.

Students interested in attending college out of state should look into "out-of-state fee waivers" in the form of scholarships at the out-of-state college or university. Some offer waivers for neighboring states while others offer waivers only for neighboring counties where the student resides. Usually there is at least a one-year residency requirement.

4. Community/Junior and Technical Colleges

For many students, a community college provides the best fit for the transition from high school to college. Also, difficult economic times have required students and parents to explore alternatives to entering four-year college programs as freshmen. Community Colleges provide many opportunities for students. Financially, they are much less expensive than four-year colleges. Students are accepted regardless of their educational experience. (Keep in mind, students graduating without a "college and career readiness" rigorous curriculum may have to take remedial courses at a cost to the student without the potential of getting college credit to be ready for college-level work.) Universities within the state four-year public university system have transfer agreements with the community colleges to accept specified credits toward bachelor degree programs. It will be important for the student and parent to check which credits will transfer to the four-year university. Students obtaining an Associate's Degree in a specific field may still lack core curriculum classes and will be required to take basic core classes to complete the Bachelor's Degree. Students considering application to military academies and ROTC programs must start the process prior to senior year. Seek the assistance of your counselor with this application process.

APPLYING EARLY: DEFINITIONS

Many students like the idea of applying to colleges early, having the process completed by winter break, and relaxing during the second semester. Below is an explanation of some of the terms used to describe the various ways of applying early. These are generally only used by private colleges and not by any schools in Texas.:

Instant Decision

Some students will receive a letter in September offering “Instant Decision.” It is a way for colleges to “cast a wide net” looking for students to apply. Colleges may offer to waive the application fee as well as the essay. They also may ask you to choose one of the options for admission below. Be sure you understand each. Applying through this process will give you a quick answer as to whether you have what the college is looking for or not. It usually is based on ACT or SAT test scores and your GPA. Some will also request a Counselor Recommendation at this time. See page 11 for Recommendation information.

Early Admission

Some colleges and universities accept students before they have finished high school, usually at the end of the student’s junior year. Admission is rare under this plan, and is only appropriate for the student, who has taken an accelerated high school academic program, has an exemplary high school record, and who is mature enough to make the early move to college.

Early Decision

Several schools offer an admission plan for those students who are certain of their college choice during the first semester of their senior year. Application deadlines for early decision plans are usually in October or November. A student who applies to a school under an early decision plan must sign a contract (as do the student’s parents and college counselor) which states that the student will attend that school if accepted. The student also states that he/she will withdraw any and all other applications submitted to other schools and that he/she will not submit any others.

Applying to a school early decision is a serious and binding commitment. Students applying early are reviewed primarily on the basis of their performance through junior year, so the early decision option is usually advisable only for students with outstanding academic records.

Responses for early decision applicants are usually received before winter break of the senior year. A student may apply to only one school as an early decision candidate, so if you decide to do this, you should be sure that it is the school you would like to attend.

Early Action

This is a decision plan similar to that described above, but the important difference is that your acceptance is not binding. Most early action deadlines are in November and December, and you will usually receive a decision before winter break. You will have until the May 1st Candidate’s Reply Date, however, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan.

Decisions under this plan are made primarily on the basis of your performance through junior year. It is usually more difficult to get accepted under an early action plan than it is through the regular admission process.

Single Choice Early Action

This is a new form of Early Action – first adopted by Harvard, Stanford and Yale. Single Choice Early Action is a non-binding early application program that allows you to apply to **ONLY ONE** College early. Deadlines are in November and you will usually receive a decision before winter break. You will have until the May 1st Candidate’s Reply Date, however, to decide whether or not you will attend that school. You may still apply to other schools even if accepted under this plan.

COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

Most four-year colleges require the SAT Reasoning Test/ACT and some also require SAT Subject Tests. If you were not happy with your SAT/ACT score from last spring or have not taken an SAT/ACT test yet, we recommend that you take a prep course or purchase a study guide online at www.collegeboard.com for the SAT or www.actstudent.org for the ACT, or through private companies such as Kaplan, Huntington, or Sylvan, etc. Another great place for practice is <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat>, as well as there are Question of the Day Apps or Twitter feeds, and other study guides from Barnes and Noble. Register online at www.collegeboard.org (SAT) and www.actstudent.org (ACT) for the October, November, or December tests at if you are applying to a college early decision, take the test in October so your scores will be available at the time you submit your application. **YOU MUST REGISTER ABOUT A MONTH AHEAD, SO CHECK DATES AND DON'T MISS A DEADLINE!** At the time of registration for your SAT/ACT tests, you may request your scores be sent to up to four colleges of your choice at no additional cost. Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch may qualify for a fee waiver for the cost of the SAT/ACT. See your counselor to get the form. Additional requests for score reports can also be made at a later time for a fee. Determine if the colleges to which you want to apply will require SAT/ACT scores, and/or SAT Subject Test scores. It is the **student's responsibility** to request his/her official scores be sent directly from the College Board or the ACT to each college when applying.

RELEASE OF SCHOOL RECORDS

Official Transcript Permission Form

An essential step in the college application process is to have your high school transcript sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Obtain an **Official Transcript Permission Form**, (found in the front office) which allows our staff to send your official high school record of classes, grades, class rank and GPA to colleges in your senior year. At mid-year, your transcript will be sent only to the colleges that require one (no charge). After you graduate, one final transcript will be sent to the college of your choice no charge). Your counselor will obtain the above information in the spring by requesting that you fill out a form indicating which college you will attend. Please observe all deadline dates. We process a very high volume of applications. Allow at least ten school days for transcript requests to be processed.

Completing the College Application

Each application has the directions for completion on the website or on the document if you are completing a paper application. The application fee is non-refundable. Set up a realistic schedule for the completion of your applications. Prepare your part of the application **completely, accurately, and neatly** online. Complete all required signatures and registration payments if applicable. Students who use a fee waiver for the SAT/ACT test may also be able to get a fee waiver for some college applications. Submit your application packet in sufficient time so that it is received before the application deadline date.

How to Obtain a College Application

Apply online with www.applytexas.org or www.commonapp.org so you can use this one application for multiple colleges to save you time or you can go directly to the university's website. Be sure to print any supplemental forms and provide them to teachers and/or the counseling office at the appropriate time. Make a copy of your completed application before you submit it. Also, print your confirmation page/email when you submit the application.

Application Essay

The application essay is a perfect opportunity for you to directly address the college's admission committee to introduce them to you from a personal perspective. You can share your reasons for applying to a particular college, career goals, insights, and opinions as well as your accomplishments. Through your essay, the committee will be able to assess your communication

skills, while acquiring a broader understanding of your attitudes, feelings, imagination and creativity. The essay should help them to distinguish you as an individual from the other applicants. Arrange with your English teacher to have him/her read the rough draft of your essay and assist you with changes, as needed. Remember, this is a process that takes time. Start in September to afford yourself the time to create a well written essay that you will be proud to submit to the admission committee.

Follow-up after Completion of the Application

Contact the college about two weeks after the application has been submitted online or mailed to make sure it has been received. You will receive communication from the college at varying times regarding additional information that may be needed as well as the admission decisions. It is beneficial to develop a **speaking relationship with the admission staff member** who is reviewing your application if possible, but don't overdo it. Send a thank you note to each college that you have chosen not to attend. In the event that you decide to change colleges, it can be helpful to have a specific contact person with whom you have communicated in the past. This is also a good time to continue to apply for scholarships, and most importantly, to maintain high standards academically. A second visit to your top choice colleges can assist you in making the final decision as to where you will attend college.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Counselor Recommendation:

In the event that your application has a portion which is addressed to the principal or secondary school counselor, it is **Your Responsibility** to bring that portion to the School Counseling Office for completion along with the forms indicated in (b) below:

a. Know your school counselor's email address and provide that on your online application. If you are completing a paper application and the recommendation form is attached to the application, a photocopy will be made for the counselor to complete and the application will be returned to you.

b. Bring your completed student assessment form, activity summary/resume, and your parent reflection form (optional) to the school counseling office. They will be kept on file in the school counseling office; however, it may be wise to make copies for your own records. The forms are located in this booklet.

Parent Reflection Form (Optional): Parents are invited to add their own thoughts to the information the counselor will use for the letter of recommendation. Although counselors may not use all of the information provided, the broader perspective is useful as we seek a thorough understanding of the students we recommend.

a) Examples of information that would be helpful:

Significant childhood experiences

Critical events that had either a positive or negative impact

Family events that impacted your child (marriage, divorce, adoption, death of a loved one, etc.)

b) We would appreciate you limiting your comments to one page. You may use a separate sheet of paper if you prefer; however, please make sure the student's full name is included.

The counselor will need at least **TEN (10) school days** to complete the package before it is submitted to the college to which you are applying. Please watch your deadline date to assure that your paperwork will be completed by the date designated.

Teacher Recommendation:

Some colleges accept teacher recommendations. Carefully consider one or two teachers, preferably ones who you have worked closely with and that you feel confident will write a complimentary recommendation for you. It may be a teacher from a previous year. Complete a teacher recommendation request form and include a copy of your student activity

summary/resume. Deliver the forms to the teacher **at least three weeks** prior to your deadline date.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

Grants – This type of aid does not have to be repaid, but there may be an obligation regarding grades while in college, selection of major, or employment upon graduation.

Grants are awards that may be based on financial need or other eligibility criteria.

Scholarships – Scholarship recipients may have to meet criteria such as academic achievement, extra-curricular activities, community involvement, etc. They may also require certain criteria to be met while in college.

Loans – These usually have lower interest rates than commercial loans and must be repaid generally after you have graduated or left college.

Student employment or work study – This may mean a job that the college located for you or employment you found on your own.

How to Apply For Financial Aid

Contact the colleges to which you are applying, online on their website, to request information about scholarships and financial aid. Complete the applications neatly and accurately (first impressions are important). Meet your deadlines! Be careful of scams from unscrupulous people. **ALL COLLEGES OVER SCHOLARSHIPS, YOU WILL NEED TO SEARCH ON THEIR WEBSITE TO FIND THEM, ALWAYS APPLY TO THEM!**

Use free websites to do scholarships searches (list available in this packet). Start your search for scholarships in September of your senior year. Scholarships are available throughout the year. Criteria for scholarships vary widely: academic merit, leadership, service to school and community, talent, financial need, etc.

The FAFSA is the U.S. Dept. of Education's free application for federal student aid. In December go to <http://pin.ed.gov> to request a pin number that you will need to be able to complete the FAFSA. Complete the FAFSA as early as possible in **January**. The form should be done online at: www.fafsa.ed.gov (this is the only free website). Most colleges award financial need monies based on the determination of need on the FAFSA report. You will need your pin number to access the student aid report (SAR) online.

There are many local scholarships available for students. Contact civic organizations for applications. The school counseling office publishes lists of scholarships throughout the year. It is your responsibility to complete applications and meet the submission deadlines. It is encouraged to attend a financial aid presentation with your parents at a college fair or fall preview hosted by one of your local universities or colleges.

Athletes

If you are planning to participate in Division I or II sports in college, you must register with the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) Clearinghouse ASAP at www.eligibilitycenter.org.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

GENERAL COLLEGE INFORMATION

The College Board (SAT/AP/PSAT/College Info): www.collegeboard.com

The National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC) - a good resource to an array of links: <http://www.nacacnet.org>

ACT - includes test registration and test-prep information: www.actstudent.org

US News and World Report - be wary of the rankings, but there is much to learn at this site. The "school comparison" feature is great: www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/eduhome.htm

Colleges That Change Lives - site based on best-selling, highly regarded college advisor, Loren Pope. Insights about some wonderful and sometimes overlooked places: www.ctclonline.com

College View - a good source for information on all colleges: www.collegeview.com

Student Gateway to the Government - a multi-purpose site with info on college, careers and the government: <http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/index.jsp>

CollegeNET - an all-purpose site with a host of useful links and programs: <http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/index.jsp>

FASTWEB – easy-to-use college and scholarship search site: www.fastweb.com

Fiske Guide Books – from the author of the reliable and popular guidebook comes a full array of college admission-related resources: www.fiskeguide.com

Peterson's Guide - College search, test prep and specialty schools information based on Peterson's Guides: <http://www.petersons.com/ugchannel/>

Princeton Review - Test prep, college search and other college-related info: www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx?uidbadge

College Prowler – College search information from a student's point of view: <https://colleges.niche.com/>

Historically Black Colleges Common Application - find applications for 29 different institutions: www.eduinonline.com

Apply Texas – an application site for to apply to Texas colleges with one application www.applytexas.org

The Common Application - 200+ schools accept it and you should use it if applying to more than one school – especially out of state: www.commonapp.org

FINANCIAL AID

Compare Financial Aid Packages – part of the College Board site that allows you to compare financial aid packages: www.collegeboard.com/student/pay/scholarshipsand-aid/index.html

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) - A must for anyone applying for need-based aid. You can apply on line: www.fafsa.ed.gov

FAFSA Pin Registration – You must have a pin number to complete the FAFSA application online. You can apply for the pin number at: www.pin.ed.gov

Completing the FAFSA - detailed, step-by-step guidance on completing the form: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/resources#complete>

FAFSA4caster – provides an early estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid: www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov

College for Texans – www.collegeforalltexans.com a site for comparing colleges costs

CSS Profile - If applying to private schools, check to see if they require this form. You can apply online: <http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>

FINAID - general site for anything having to do with aid: www.finaid.org/

FastWeb - general financial aid site with great scholarship search engine as well as an EFC calculator function: www.fastweb.com/

Sallie Mae - information about loans and payment options: www.salliema.com/

How Stuff Works - Interesting and comprehensive site with loads of details and helpful tools: <http://money.howstuffworks.com/college-financial-aid.htm>

Comparing Financial Aid Awards - A US News and World Report product that provides helpful charts enabling you to line up and compare awards: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges>

Mach 25 Scholarship Search - CollegeNet's search tool <http://www.collegenet.com/mach25/>

Student Guide on Financial Aid - Government site, a comprehensive site with info available in both Spanish and English: http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html

Peterson's - Comprehensive guide for financing your education: www.petersons.com/finaid/

Scholarships - A free resources for finding scholarships and other information about aid:
www.scholarships.com

Savings Plans - Though by the time you are in your junior year, this information might be too late, finding out about 529 Plans may offer some help: www.savingforcollege.com & www.collegesavings.org

Scholarship Scams - A Federal Trade Commission-run site. It is always good to check on what you learn about on the web: <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0082-scholarship-and-financial-aid-scams>

SPECIAL INTEREST

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) - www.ncaa.org

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) - www.naia.org

Black Excel: The College Help Network - designed to help African-American students navigate the college admission process: www.blackexcel.org/

Historically Black Colleges - www.blackhighereducation.com

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities - <http://www.hacu.net/>

Association on Higher Education and Disability - committed to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities: <http://www.ahead.org/>

Children and Adults with ADD - www.chadd.org

American Association of University Women - www.aauw.org/

LD Online - Interactive learning guide on disabilities for parents, children and educators: www.ldonline.org

Attention Deficit Disorder Association - Resource on huge array or ADD/ADHD related issues: www.add.org

Peace Corp - main resource on the ultimate service learning project:
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

CAREER INFORMATION

ASVAB Career Exploration Program - Developed by Department of Defense; free, comprehensive career site: www.asvabprogram.com

US Department of Labor - All the numbers on could possibly hope for in career planning: <http://stat.bls.gov/>

Department of Commerce - info on government jobs and other data: <http://www.fedworld.gov/>

Mapping Your Future - multilingual tool kit on career planning: <http://mappingyourfuture.org>

Occupational Outlook Handbook – provides job descriptions, required education, and future opportunities. www.bls.gov/oco

ALTERNATIVE AND YEAR-OFF PROGRAMS

Internship Programs – Listings of +7800 programs and 200,000 positions:
www.internshipprograms.com

Time Out - for options for taking some time off before heading off to school?
www.timeoutassociates.com

Study Abroad - www.studyabroad.com

AmeriCorps - National Service Program: www.thesca.org

City Year - National Youth Service Organization- www.cityyear.org

Gap Year - A host of travel and work ideas for students prior to heading off to college:
www.gapyear.com

Outward Bound - link for adventure-based environmental program:
<http://www.outwardbound.org/>

Taking Off - resources for gap year programs all over world: <http://www.takingoff.net/>

World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms - dedicated to helping those who would like to volunteer on organic farms internationally: <http://woof.org/>

QUESTIONS TO ASK ON A COLLEGE OPEN HOUSE VISIT

You have only a short time on campus for the open house visit. Prioritize the questions that are most important for you to have answered.

What percent of students receive financial aid?

What is the faculty like? Caring? Friendly? Aloof? Rigid?

Do professors or graduate students teach freshman courses?

What is the typical class size, and how much individual attention will I receive?

Does the college have an active Career Center to help me prepare for a successful transition to the world of work after graduation?

What is the atmosphere on campus? Friendly? Relaxed? Competitive? Pressured?

What tutorial assistance is available to students?

What part do fraternities and sororities play in the social and extra-curricular life of the college?

Does the college provide study abroad and internship opportunities?

Does the college provide co-op, internship or capstone work-based experiential learning opportunities?

Does the college support an active visiting speaker's program as well as a diverse mixture of entertainment?

What are the percentages of graduates accepted to graduate, medical, and law schools?

How flexible are dormitory living spaces?

Are there medical and counseling services available on campus?

Are there part time employment opportunities on campus and in the surrounding community?

Is there public transportation to shopping, airports, train stations, and the bus depot?

[SAMPLE LETTER TO COLLEGE OF INTEREST]

(Can also be modified to an e-mail format)

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Director of Admissions
Name of College
Address
City, State, Zip Code

To the Director of Admissions:

I am a senior at Gladewater High School, in Gladewater, Texas, and I am interested in knowing more about your school. I would appreciate it if you would send me the following information:

- a general bulletin explaining entrance requirements, college costs, course offerings, and facilities available
- an application for admission
- financial aid information
- information related to [*your special interests* such as academic majors and extra-curricular activities]

Sincerely,

(Your signature)
(Your name typed or printed)

COLLEGE TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS

In order for Gladewater High School to process student transcripts, please complete and return the permission form below. Transcripts sent from Gladewater High School do not include student SAT, ACT, or AP score reports. **These scores will need to be requested from your College Board or ACT online account to be sent directly to the colleges of your choice. When taking these entrance exams, you may request up to four colleges to receive your information free of charge. For additional requests – there is a small fee from the testing agency. If you have a few colleges in mind, it is a good idea to go ahead and send scores when you register.**

Transcript request forms are located online on the Gladewater High School website.

If the student has received an Instant Decision Application with application fee and essay waiver, simply create your online account through the college and provide them with your counselor's email address (halle@gladewaterisd.com) so your counselor may submit your transcript and counselor recommendation online. Please fill out the Student Self-Assessment Form in the counselor's office to help the counselor in writing your recommendation. This self-assessment will also assist you in forming your essay for later requests by the universities to which you are applying. The Parent Reflection page is optional but could be provided to the counselor as well.

A separate transcript form must be submitted to the counselor's office for each college for which you are applying. Each time a request is made for a transcript you will need a parent signature unless you are 18 years of age. This is a federal law. Many colleges will request counselor recommendations, teacher recommendations, activity forms, as well as essays. Many of these items can be submitted online. If you need the counseling office to send out materials for you by mail, please gather all necessary additional paperwork well ahead of any deadlines and bring to the counselor's office. Once all ancillary materials have been gathered and turned in to the counselor's office, your complete packet will be mailed to the college or university of your choice. Each request will be processed separately as you may want to tailor your letters or responses to fit the individual university. There will be no charge for the mailing of "packets" for students to individual universities.

School Counseling Office

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STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

Student Name _____ Date _____

Please answer the following questions completely and give it to your counselor. Your specific comments will not be sent to colleges but may be incorporated in your Counselor's recommendation, as appropriate. It probably would be best if the answers were typed in complete sentences such as "*I am a visual learner who prefers an active...*" and submitted by email to the counselor at halle@gladewaterisd.com

1. What kind of a learner are you? Which academic setting or assignments make you thrive? What interests you academically?
2. Identify the extracurricular activity (school-related, community, employment, etc.) that has been the most rewarding for you. Please explain.
3. Describe your strengths/attributes/skills/talents. Be accurate, not modest!
4. Identify areas that you would like to strengthen. Please explain.
5. List three adjectives that you would use to describe yourself?
6. If you could start high school again, what would you do differently? Please explain.
7. Tell a story about a time you displayed leadership.
8. Identify and explain any circumstances (personal or family) that have impacted, positively or negatively, on your academic performance or your extracurricular involvement in high school.
9. What is your intended college major/program of study and what is your career goal?
10. What three values are most important to you? Give examples of why or how they play out in your life.
11. Who is your idol or personal hero, and why?
12. Imagine that an admission counselor is interviewing you and asks: "Why should we accept you? What will you bring to our campus?" Give specific examples of ways you will contribute to their campus. Think about your "life experiences" that set you apart from others. Please include things such as your family background, work, travel, summer programs, hobbies, talents, completed projects, experiences living somewhere else in the U.S. and/or abroad.
13. Is there anything else you would like the college to know about you? Please explain.
14. Do you believe your transcript is an accurate reflection of your ability? Why or why not? What factors have influenced your school performance, either negatively or positively?

School Counseling Office

STUDENT ACTIVITIES FORM

Student Name _____

Please list all organizations (school related, community based or religious) in which you are currently or previously involved and the years involved:

Please list all extra-curricular activities in which you are currently or previously involved and the years involved, list any officer positions held.

Please list all volunteer or community activities in which you are currently or previously involved and the years involved:

School Counseling Office PARENT'S REFLECTION PAGE (OPTIONAL)

As a parent, you have a truly unique and complex viewpoint regarding your child's personality and development. Please share your insights on this form, providing as many details as possible. Feel free to incorporate your responses into an informal letter or essay, but please limit it to one page. Your specific comments will not be sent to the college but may be incorporated in your student's counselor recommendation letter, as appropriate.

Please return your Parent's Reflection Page to the School Counseling Office by email at halle@gladewaterisd.com with the following information:

Student's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Parents' Name _____

Sample Questions to Guide your response:

1. In which areas have you witnessed the most development and growth in your child during his/her high school years? Please give specific examples.
2. What are your child's significant personality traits? Give at least one example and relate a personal anecdote to illustrate these traits.
3. What are some of the outstanding accomplishments of your child during the past three or four years?
4. Have there been any unusual personal circumstances that have affected your child's educational experiences or personal development? Please explain.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION REQUEST FORM

Complete the information on the request form and submit it to the teacher or other adult at least 3 weeks prior to your deadline. Your letter will be much better if the request is made in plenty of time. If the recommendation is to be mailed by the teacher, provide an envelope with postage and addressed to the college. If you would like all of your recommendation letters sent from the Office of School Counseling along with your other materials, please indicate below. (Feel free to type the bulleted points on a separate page so that you have adequate room to expound upon your answers.) You might also request a letter of recommendation from anyone outside of your family who knows you well including an employer, church member, or activity sponsor or coach, for example.

Student Name: _____

Date request submitted: _____

Dear _____,

I would greatly appreciate having you write a letter of recommendation for me to be sent to colleges. Some things I would like you to consider in your letter of recommendation could include the following:

- What I remember most about taking your class:
- A challenge that I overcame in your class was:
- I felt really proud of myself in your class when I...:
- I experienced the most academic and/or personal growth in your class from:
- Other information that you may not already know, but I would like you to reflect upon in your letter of recommendation:

(Student please check one box)

- 🍏 Please send your letter of recommendation to the school counselor's office by email at halle@gladewaterisd.com by _____ (date).
- 🍏 Please send your letter of recommendation by _____ (date) directly to the college/university in a sealed envelope (provided) to:

College/University: _____

Office of Admissions: Office of Admissions _____

Address: _____

City, State Zip _____