

Jericho High School



College Planning Guide

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ON CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Choosing the “right” college is both a fascinating and a frustrating task. Fascinating because there are so many fine colleges and universities from which to choose; frustrating because it is difficult to know on what basis to decide: Size, Prestigious reputation? Cost? Location? The condition of the dormitories? Strong areas of study? Friends who are attending a particular college?

More than 2.5 million students start college each Fall. For most of them, the first day on campus marks the end of a year or more of anxious planning, different chores and plain hard work. If you are just beginning the college selection process, the planning, chores, and hard work are still ahead of you.

Chances are that you are both excited and bewildered by the prospect of choosing one college from over the 3,200 accredited colleges in the United States. Maybe you are confused by the amount of information (and misinformation) that is available and by contradictory advice about “good” and “bad” colleges. Or maybe you do not have enough information about colleges and are not sure how to get the facts you need. If you are like many college bound students, you are worried about grades and test scores and whether you will be accepted by any of the colleges you think would be right for you. No one can guarantee that a particular college or university will be “right” for you, but there are many aspects which you can consider which may enable you to make a more informed decision.

We hope this handbook will be of assistance to you in making that decision.

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PROCEDURES

Our College Counseling Philosophy

Jericho High School encourages each senior to seek a college or university which is both academically challenging and suited to his or her particular intellectual level. We make every effort to suggest to each student, schools which will be sufficiently stimulating without being overpowering. In recent years, most members of each senior class have been accepted at their first-choice colleges. We are primarily concerned that each graduate be admitted to a quality school which, hopefully, will best suit his or her needs. This may, in some cases, necessitate taking some risks and being turned down.

The counseling staff attempts to walk the narrow line between giving too much direction and too little. We offer advice, provide information, answer questions, and remind students of the importance of certain deadlines.

But ultimately, the decisions are the students', and we want them to be responsible for doing their own research, completing applications, and meeting deadlines. If we, or parents, do this for them, we are negating a significant learning experience; that of making their own decisions and living with the outcomes, something they will be doing constantly upon entering college.

Your School Counselor

Your counselor can be an invaluable source of information about colleges. Your counselor is a trained professional who can not only help you make realistic decisions about college applications, but also help you predict what the outcome of your decisions will be.

Your counselor will meet with you prior to the beginning of the senior year, usually during the Spring of the junior year. Parents are invited to attend one or more of these conferences. The Jericho High School Guidance staff encourages conference time with students and parents whenever necessary. Counselors are always available for day and Tuesday evening appointments.

One of your counselor's most important tasks is writing a personal recommendation. Your counselor utilizes numerous resources to gather sufficient data to write an articulate, persuasive recommendation on your behalf. Information about you is collected from your teachers, your parents, your peers, and of course from you in an attempt to construct a comprehensive letter of recommendation.

Counselors are in constant touch with admissions offices throughout the country by phone, e-mail and the Internet, and many colleges and universities are visited personally by the guidance staff.

The Jericho High School Guidance Department is equipped with the latest up-to-date computer technology that allows for accurate and timely processing of information about colleges, universities, occupations, financial aid and access to the World Wide Web.

Your counselor can also help you plan an itinerary for college visits and see that your transcript (your high school record) is available for those visits. But your counselor's major role is to help you make a preliminary list of possible college choices, keeping in mind whatever criteria you have given him or her, and assist in every way possible toward the final goal: acceptance into a college of your choice.

- **College Visits**

Perhaps the most realistic method of deciding upon a college is to visit the campus. While a campus visit is not always practical, especially for schools which are far from your home, the college visit allows you to judge the school on a first-hand basis.

Campus visits should be scheduled during your junior or senior year of high school. Try to set aside a block of time in which to see each school. The advantage of visiting early is that you can then make a second appointment later on before you come to your final college decision. Visits during the school year are more beneficial than visits during college vacation periods, since you can see the college in session and will be able to assess the school more realistically. If that cannot be arranged, however, utilize the summer to make some of your college stops.

To make the most of your campus visits, we suggest the following:

- **Arrange the visit well in advance**
 - Call the admissions office and set up an interview with the admissions officer, if available.
 - Arrange for a formal campus tour as well.
- **Try to visit when classes are in session**
 - Ask permission to sit in on some classes, especially in areas that are of interest to you.
Notice all of the following:
 - How many students are in the class?
 - Is the class being taught by a graduate student, an instructor or a professor?
 - What text books are being used?
 - What are the assigned readings, papers, examinations, and projects?
 - What is the tone of the class: formal, relaxed or laissez-faire?
 - Does this suit your learning style?
 - Finally, what is your gut reaction to the class: positive, negative, indifferent or unsure?
- **Stay overnight if possible**
 - Try to sleep in a dormitory so that you get a taste of college living.
 - Staying over will also afford you the opportunity to sit in on additional classes.

- **Don't be shy!**

- talk to students and teachers. Tell them that you are a high school student and that you are considering this college. Ask the students what they like and dislike about the college. Ask if they would recommend the school to their friends. Remember, take the response with a grain of salt! Only you can judge what's right for you.

- **Visit the cafeteria, the library, the dormitories.**

- have a meal on campus. Look around, strike up a conversation with strangers. You'll find that most people will try to be helpful.

- **Look up any campus activities that appeal to you.**

- these include clubs, teams, newspapers, and organizations. Talk to students who are members. You will probably find that you share interests with these students.

- **Walk the campus without a formal guide.**

- look around, notice the buildings, the students, the layout of the campus. Try to get a "feel" for the college.

Testing

The score requirements vary from college to college. Generally, the more selective require (1) the SAT I (Scholastic Aptitude Test): (2) SAT II tests (subject tests). A smaller percentage of schools require the ACT (American College Testing Program). You should refer to the college catalogue for the specific requirement of a particular school.

The testing program at Jericho High School is as follows:

(a) **The PSAT/NMSQT** (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is a two-hour 10 minute version of the SAT I, measuring verbal, writing, and mathematical ability, given during the fall of the junior year. Scores on each section of the exam range from 20 to 80. A "Selection Index Score" is reported for each student by adding the verbal, math and writing scores together and these scores range from 60-240. The Selection Index is used to select National Merit Semi-Finalists, and Letter of Commendation recipients. This test is designed to give some indication of the possible range of SAT I scores.

(b) The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT I) – a three-hour 20 minute objective test measuring critical reading, writing and mathematical abilities. Scores range from 200 to 800 and are reported by mail to the student and the school four or five weeks after the test. Electronic and telephone access to scores are provided by ETS. It is recommended that juniors take the SAT I in the spring, and many seniors retake the test in the fall, since scores often increase. Your SAT I scores let you compare your academic preparation and ability with the nearly 1.8 million students who take the SAT I each year, although your high school record (your grades, etc.) is the best single indication of how well you will do in college.

(c) The American College Testing Program (ACT) – a three-hour battery of tests in English, mathematics, social science, and natural science which assesses general education development in these areas. An optional 30 minute writing section is available, most colleges require the writing portion. It may be taken in place of, or in addition to the SAT I should a particular college not accept the SAT I. Scores are reported on a scale of 1 to 36.

(d) The SAT II: Subject Tests - measure a student's knowledge and skills in a particular subject and his/her ability to apply that knowledge. The SAT II subject tests fall into five general subject areas, English, history, social studies, mathematics, science and language.

Each of the SAT II tests is one hour in length. You may take a maximum of three on any single date. Each test is made up entirely of multiple-choice questions of various types.

Certain colleges may require SAT II's. It is your responsibility to check individual college websites for the specific requirements.

(e) Advanced Placement Examinations (AP) – three-hour tests in specific subject matter areas. Score range is 1 to 5. Many colleges give advance placement and/or credit for scores of 3, 4, or 5.

(f) College Level Examination Program (CLEP) - sponsored by the College Entrance Examination Board, offers you the opportunity to obtain college credit by examination. No matter where or how you have learned, you can take the CLEP tests. If the results are acceptable to your college you may receive credit.

College Representatives

Each year numerous admissions representatives from colleges and universities across the country visit Jericho High School. This is an opportunity to hear about particular colleges and to ask specific questions of the college visitors.

A list of scheduled visits is posted on the Jericho website well in advance.

College Fairs

Colleges themselves try to aid students in the difficult and demanding process of college selection. One of the simplest ways of obtaining information about colleges is to attend college fairs in our area. They are well advertised, especially to high school students and their parents.

One distinct advantage of attending college fairs is that you are introduced to numerous colleges. You may find one or more schools which you had not previously considered that now hold some interest to you.

The Guidance Office

Jericho's guidance office has a wealth of materials, and is open to students and parents during school hours and during specified evening hours by appointment.

Resources Available in Jericho's Guidance Office

1. Up-to date college catalogues.
2. Folders on college majors, with a variety of booklets from colleges which offer more unusual majors.
3. College reference books.
4. Information on scholarships, ROTC programs, summer programs, and foreign colleges.
5. Files with information about colleges, scholarships, and test dates.
6. Career information and job opportunities.
7. SUNY, CUNY & Common College applications.
8. Financial aid forms, website information.
9. "Campus Connection" with alumni telephone numbers.
10. Internet and www connection with colleges, ETS, etc.

FINDING COLLEGES THAT FIT YOUR PREFERENCES AND ABILITIES

To help you match your preference and abilities to colleges, you might want to consider the following major college characteristics:

- a. Academic Programs of Study
- b. Location
- c. Competitiveness
- d. Undergraduate Enrollment
- e. Athletic Program and Activities
- f. Special Services
- g. Cost

“Hot Schools”

Each year a number of colleges become extraordinarily popular, a distinction which cannot be easily explained. These schools are “hot”, that is, favored by that particular year’s high school seniors.

Why do some schools become “hot” while others, equally impressive, do not? Many factors come into play. Perhaps the college engaged in a successful advertising campaign and popularized itself; perhaps the school is a good buy; perhaps it is merely by whim and caprice that the college is so fashionable. If you apply to a “hot” school, be aware that your opportunities for admission are slimmer because the college is so popular; a “hot” school is almost never a safe school. Keep that in mind!

WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR IN AN APPLICANT

Academic Record

- Quality of Courses taken
- Challenging and competitive classes
- GPA
- Consistency of performance

Entrance Exam Scores

- SAT I
- SAT II
- ACT

Essay

- Be specific; answer the question
- Should be your own work

Activity Record

- 9-12 grade activities
- Include athletics, clubs, community service
- Employment

Recommendations

- Teachers
- Counselors
- Employers
- Coaches

THE APPLICATION

Completing applications is a time-consuming, tedious, but most important task. A poorly organized and/or poorly written personal essay (required by most colleges) can have a significant effect on a candidate's chances for admission.

Applicants should not hesitate to talk with their counselors or one of the members of the English department about their essays, for colleges consider originality, organization, and presentation of one's ideas an important factor in the admissions process. Many colleges ask for one or two teacher recommendations. These are separate from the counselor's letter. Be certain to indicate the deadline for the recommendation to the teacher.

Begin your applications early. Be sure to pay close attention to deadline dates which vary among schools. Early applications to state universities are often particularly important, for when applicants are accepted on a rolling admission basis, the competition for available space increases as the deadline for applications approaches. **Remember, Jericho has deadlines too. They are posted on the Jericho website. In order to ensure quality time to review all students' applications, we request that you submit all applications knowing that it may take up to ten school days to mail your applications to colleges.**

If you did not list the colleges to which you are applying on your College Board test registration form, you should send your scores online at www.collegeboard.com. Utilize the on-line service via the WWW offered by ETS for this purpose. ETS WWW address is, <http://www.collegeboard.org>. While your test scores are listed on your transcript, colleges will not accept this information directly from the high school, and if test scores are not received by the college, considerable delays in the processing of the application can occur.

In addition, the fall of the senior year is often a very busy time, and although many applications are not due until January or February, there is considerable paperwork which must be done, both by your counselor and by our guidance staff. For this reason, we request that all applications be completed by Thanksgiving.

Tips on Organizing Your College Application

By now your room is decorated in early college catalogue fashion. You may have received all of the catalogues and applications which you have requested. You've also received many application packets which you did not ask for. Where should you begin?

Step 1

- Create a folder for each college. Include in it the following:
 - ✓ application form
 - ✓ college catalogue
 - ✓ financial aid material
 - ✓ correspondence between you and school
 - ✓ your impression of the college visit
 - ✓ other relevant material

Step 2

- Decide upon your list of college applications
 - ✓ safety schools
 - ✓ possibilities
 - ✓ reach schools

Your list of schools should range from approximately five to ten institutions. If you are undecided about a particular school, put the folder aside. Come back to that college after you have completed the remainder of your list and determine whether you wish to attend the school.

Remember: do not apply to any university that you do not wish to attend. A school is not considered "safe" if you really don't want to go there, why bother applying?

Step 3

- photocopy each application as your rough draft

Step 4

- type or print your applications or complete on-line

Step 5

- proofread each application carefully

Step 6

- submit your recommendation forms. Allow your teachers and counselor sufficient time to work on your recommendations. Check back with the teacher in about two weeks to ensure that your recommendation forms have been mailed out.

The Different Decision

While some admissions jargon seems standard from Brown to Berkeley, when it comes to application options, known as “Decision Plans,” even experts get befuddled. Most confounding are the early application offerings.

1. **Early Decision:** means that a student has decided on one first-choice college, and in exchange for submitting to an earlier application deadline, and being prepared to sign a statement on commitment, the candidate will receive an early reply, usually by December 15th. The student, if admitted, must withdraw all other applications and must attend this school in the fall.
2. **Early Action:** means colleges will make an early admission evaluation, usually between December 15th and January 31st, but the candidate is not required to make a commitment until May and is not committed to attend.
3. **Rolling Admissions:** means applications are reviewed as they are received, generally notifying students within four to eight weeks of the admission committee’s decision. Since places are filled on a first – come first – served basis, procrastinators are often hurt by this plan.
4. **Single Choice Early Action:** means a student will receive a non-binding decision usually by December 15th, but the candidate is prohibited from applying early elsewhere unless it is a non-binding program at a public institute. Students are allowed to apply under regular decision programs to all colleges.

Student Athletes

All student athletes who are interested in participating at the college level should visit the NCAA website at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net and register to be eligible.

Special Consideration for ESL Students

If English is not your first language and/or not spoken at home, make sure this is indicated on the application. Some forms will ask directly. Otherwise, you should attach a brief statement explaining your language history. Colleges will usually require that a TOEFL exam be submitted. If SAT I's are required in addition to the TOEFL exam, colleges will consider your language history when interpreting the test results.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is recommended for students whose native language is not English. It is taken by those who have been in the United States for five years or less.

The TOEFL has three components: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension. It is scored on a 200-677 scale. TOEFL applications and local test site information are available in the guidance office.

College application questions that ask about racial/ethnic background are, by law, optional. If you identify with a racial or ethnic minority, you should check the appropriate box.

Many colleges throughout the United States offer services similar to the English as a Second Language (ESL) program that students have experienced in high school.

WEB SITES TO KNOW

SAT Prep

www.collegebaord.org
www.powerprep.com
www.prepdoctor.com
www.studyhall.com

Register for SAT online
College Power Prep
Prep Doctor
Study Hall

Download Applications

www.collegename.edu
www.collegeedge.com
www.commonapp.org

Free
Free
Free

Financial Aid and Scholarships

www.fafsa.ed.gov
www.collegeboard.com
www.collegenet.com/mach25/
www.finaid.org
www.fastweb.com
www.scholarships.salliemae.com
www.srnexpress.com
www.ftc.gov
www.signet.com/collegemoney

Interactive version of the FAFSA
College Board Scholarship Search

Use to check legitimacy of a service

College Search

www.usnews.com allows students to customize a college search by entering any combination of more than 10 criteria, from academics to tuition to field of study to distance from home. The search engine sorts through the database and produces a list of schools that match your requirements.

www.collegeboard.com
www.act.org

Campus Safety

www.uga.edu/safe-campus/

General Scholarships Sites

www.studentservices.com/fastweb
www.rams.com/srn/

www.freschinfo.com/
www.collegeboard.org/fundfinder/bin/fundfindOl.pl
www.iwpair.com/scholarshippage

Grants/Fellowships

www.fastserve.com/college/college.html
www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/webpages.html

Essay Evaluations

www.ivyessasys.com/edit/index.html

Women, Minorities, Ethnic Groups

www.cnct.com/home/ijblack/BlackExcel.shtml
www.members.aol.com/ox13qr/webpages.eyfswm1.html
www.fie.com/molis/scholar.htm
www.asainc.org/
www.urop.uci.edu/honors-bin/scholar.pl?name=75
www.urop.uci.edu/honors-bin/scholar.pl?name=283

FAFSA Online

www.fafsa.ed.gov

Other Helpful Sites

www.sourcepath.com
www.petersons.com/resources/finance.html
www.easi.ed.gov/index.html

Career Information

www.careermosaic.com
www.missouri.edu/~cppcww/holland.html
www.review.com
www.udel.edu/CSC/career.html

Walking Tours

www.collegiatechoice.com (over 300 videos of colleges, most are of home video quality)