

Benedictine High School School Counseling Department

College Research & Application Handbook



Mr. Keith McMillin
School Counselor
mcmillin@cbhs.edu
216-421-2080 x337
607-862-6455 (Cell)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to Students and Parents	3-4
College Application Timeline – Junior & Senior Years	5-6
Quick Getting Started Checklist	7
<u>Section 1: College Testing</u>	
ACT or SAT?	8
<u>Section 2: Building and Finalizing the College List</u>	
Where Do I Find Information about Colleges	9
What Do I Look for in Colleges?	10
Building a College List	11
The College Visit	12
What to Ask on a College Visit	13
<u>Section 3: Special Factors in College Selection</u>	
College Athletes	14
Notes for Students with Learning Differences	15
<u>Section 4: College Cost & Application</u>	
Financial Aid	16
College Application Checklist	17
Admission Options	18
Requesting Transcripts and Recommendations	19
Getting the Best Recommendation Letters	20
The Common Application	21-22

April 2014

Dear Future College Student,

You are embarking on the exciting and sometimes stressful time of your life: the college search and application process! College is a big financial and time investment, and its purpose is to educate you for a career. Be thoughtful about your search. Please take care to remember a few important things along the way:

1. Your parents love you.
2. The responsibility of applying for college is yours, not theirs.
3. Grades matter.
4. Deadlines matter.
5. There are about 4,168 two and four-year colleges in the United States and more internationally. There is one for you.
6. You might receive a rejection letter or two, it's OK.
7. College is usually not free. You will need to talk to your parents about where the money will come from to pay for it. You may be responsible for some or all costs.
8. You will have to make a decision eventually about which college to attend. Your #1 college choice may not work out, so have a backup plan.
9. You may be asking a lot of people for help (your parents, your teachers, your coaches, your college counselor...), be appreciative.

I am very excited to work with you during this process whether it be for college selection counseling, application or essay help, or just to send a transcript on your behalf. I am here for you and your parents. I set appointments on an as needed basis, please don't wait for me to schedule with you if you have questions. Email is always a good way to get in touch with me, however my phone number is 607-862-6455 if you need to call or text me.

Best Wishes,
Mr. Keith McMillin
School Counselor

April 2014

Dear Future Parent of a College Student,

Whether this is your first heading to college or last, each student is different in how they handle the college search and application process. I am here to help, and I hope you and your student will find this guide a helpful resource along the way. Please take note of a few points:

1. Your teenage son loves and needs you.
2. The responsibility of applying for college is theirs, not yours.
3. Your encouragement along the way is very helpful.
4. You will get frustrated at times, and that is OK.
5. There are about 4,168 two and four-year colleges in the United States and more internationally. There is one for your son.
6. Your son may receive a rejection letter or two, it's OK.
7. College is usually not free. Unless, you have the means to cover the cost of college, you will need to have some serious talks with your son about who is paying for college and how.
8. Your son will have to make a choice eventually about where to attend, and the choice should be made thoughtfully with your help.
9. When I use the word "you" in this handbook, I am usually addressing the student.

I am very excited to work with you and your son during this process whether it be for college selection counseling, application or essay help, or just to send a transcript on your behalf. I am here for you and your son. I set appointments on an as needed basis, please don't wait for me to schedule with you if you have questions. Email is always a good way to get in touch with me, however my phone number is 607-862-6455 if you need to call or text me.

Best Wishes,
Mr. Keith McMillin
School Counselor

College Application Timeline

Here is a standard college application timeline. Your timeline may look different due to earlier or later deadlines – it is your responsibility to watch deadlines!

Fall or Winter of Junior Year:

Take the ACT and SAT for the first time. Benedictine has one ACT during the school day in spring of Junior year. Compare your scores and see if you have a preference the [website for this is listed below](#). They are both accepted at almost all schools across the country.

If you are in the top 10% of your class I recommend taking SAT II Subject tests as well. These are 1 hour exams and you can take up to 3 of them in one setting. Some school and programs require these exams and others like to see them.

Attend college visits at Benedictine. These are the college reps that in most cases read the applications. They visit Benedictine throughout fall and you need to schedule for your visits within the college section of [Naviance](#). Most of these visits are posted on the School Calendar and announced during convocation

Spring of Junior Year:

Take a test prep course or use a book/website to help you in your second taking of the ACT or SAT. [Review websites](#) for Test Prep materials can be found in the last section of this handbook.

Take the ACT or SAT again to improve your score. Most seniors have taken all ACTs or SATs by the November of their Senior year, and many attempt them 2-3 times. The studies have shown that after the 2nd time testing, the majority of people do not increase their scores. Unless there is either mitigating factors or students put a lot of effort into test preparation.

Start visiting campuses of colleges on your college list. More information can be found about college visits in section 2 of this handbook. Now is the time to start the list of schools you will apply to next year.

Summer of Senior Year:

Continue to visit colleges, although it is best to see them when classes are in session. Now is the time to start fine tuning the list of schools you will apply to. Dream schools can still be on the list, and we will discuss those later in the handbook.

Fall of Senior Year:

Finalize the application list and begin your applications. Watch your deadlines and application materials needed as they are often different for each college. Ask teachers and coaches for a letter of recommendation. Applications should be completed by October 31st.

Submit your applications then check on the college's financial aid website to see if there are additional applications for scholarships you should fill out.

Parents should attend the Financial aid seminar at Benedictine typically held on the same day as meet the teacher night.

ASAP after October 1 of Senior Year:

Fill out the [FAFSA online](#) in order to receive federal, state, and institutional financial aid. List all colleges you have applied to, so they can receive your financial information and send you an award letter for financial aid. Each college has a FAFSA deadline, too!

Winter and Spring of Senior Year:

Letters or emails will begin arriving letting you know if you have been admitted, denied, or waitlisted to a particular college.

Time to decide and send in your deposit. Colleges will hold your seat and aid until May 1.

The Quick Getting Started Checklist

Here is a list of things you will need to apply to a college. Please note, not all college applications require all of these pieces. A * has been placed next to those things that Mr. McMillin submits automatically. Most colleges have a checklist of required materials on their admissions website.

1. An application – these are usually online and found on the college’s website.
2. College online application – this is an application that was designed by the college for only that college.
3. The Common Application – this is an application that only needs to be completed once for any college that accepts it. Note that you must pay an app fee for each college and colleges may require supplemental information.
4. Letter(s) of Recommendation* – not all schools require them, but you may need them for scholarship applications later. Give at least two-weeks notice and a Brag Sheet (you will see a copy of this later in the handbook) to anyone you ask. We generally recommend securing 2 letters early in the year.
5. Test Scores – ACT or SAT scores are also not required by **all** colleges for admission, see fairtest.org for a list who don’t, most want them for scholarship. Colleges want official scores sent directly from ACT or College Board. Directions to send are in the College Testing section. Check to see if you also must take SAT II Subject Tests.
6. An Essay – this is required in the Common App and many other college applications, and it is often the part that takes the longest to finish. Start early.
7. *High School Transcript – this is an essential piece that you will request through Naviance, our online program. Mr. McMillin will send high school transcripts electronically through Naviance within two weeks of the request.
8. College Transcript – if you took a dual enrollment course or PSEO course, you will also need to request a transcript from the college that awarded the credit (often this is Columbus State or MTC). Colleges will want to see all prior college credits on official transcripts.

9. FAFSA – the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is required if you want any kind of state or federal aid for college. The online application opens October 1, and college deadlines to submit it are usually in February or March.
10. CSS Profile – Some private schools require additional financial info using the CSS.
11. *Your GPA and Class Rank – many colleges will ask you for this within the application. This is found on your transcript, and you can ask any counselor for it.

12. CEEB/College Code – you will need this when you register for ACT or SAT as well as for some scholarship and college applications.
13. Benedictine High School CEEB Code: 361-195
14. *Anticipated Graduation Date – some schools and the military want to know when you will be graduating. Class of 2015 graduation is scheduled for May 23, 2015.
15. Your College Counselor's Information – you will need to keep Mr. McMillin updated about all college applications via transcript request forms, [email](#) or through [Naviance](#).

Test Information

General: You must register for the test about 30 days prior to testing. Tests are on Saturday morning's beginning at 8am. Mr. McMillin has fee waivers if you need them. Most tests can be taken at Benedictine. You must print and take admissions ticket to the testing center. Watch deadlines and test-day directions printed on your ticket!

Which should I take? Take both once and choose one that you did better on or you felt more comfortable with and take it a second time. You can use this site to compare your scores: <http://bit.ly/ACTComp> *Note: Test scores tend to plateau after the 2nd time taking the test.

ACT: ACT.org

Many schools will require the Writing section therefore we recommend taking it. You may add up to four colleges for ACT to submit your scores to for free. If you need scores sent to other colleges than the ones you entered, you will need to order them from your student account and pay a fee for each college you send to. Some students are eligible two ACT fee waivers based on financial need check <http://www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html>

SAT: SAT.org

You have an account. We made it when you got the results of the PSAT. Login or request your password. About 70 colleges require the SAT II Subject Tests. Please check to see if your college requires or recommends them.

SAT II (Subject Tests): SAT.org

If you are in the top 10% of your class I recommend taking SAT II Subject tests as well. These are 1 hour exams and you can take up to 3 of them in one setting. Some school and programs require these exams and others like to see them.

Colleges want OFFICIAL Test Scores

Colleges often request your official ACT/SAT or SATII. If you did not initially send your scores for free when you scheduled the exam you will need to pay and send the scores through the ACT or College Board account you have. This will cost you about \$15 per school. Many schools will "super score" the SAT using the best scores from each subsection out of all the times you took it. Some schools super score the ACT, but it is not common. All colleges will consider your highest test scores regardless of how many you send them.

Where Do I Find Information about Colleges?

What are the best resources to find colleges that fit my needs? Many are websites or books and there are hundreds of them. Here are some of my favorites to help you get started!

Our Main source at Benedictine is Naviance – This is the best one stop shop and you will eventually use it to compile your list of colleges and request application materials, like transcripts and letters. Naviance gives you a good way to look at the general overview for colleges. There are 8 ways to search within Naviance and information about the SuperMatch College Search is on the Building a College List page.

Naviance is good to use in conjunction with the college's website which is the best way to get primary information about majors, costs, student life and details about individual programs.

Other Websites to search and review colleges:

- **Ohio Means Jobs K-12** - <https://jobseeker.k-12.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/seeker.aspx> This site is run by the Department of Education in Ohio and helps students locate and research careers. It is important to have a sense of the career path you want as you are looking for colleges.
- **Ohio Public Colleges & Universities** - <http://www.opuac.org/> This site gives an overview of all 13 Ohio public colleges including mid-range ACT/SAT scores and GPAs for accepted freshmen.
- **Ohio Private Colleges & Universities** - <http://www.aicuo.edu/OPC/> This site is similar to the public college one but highlights the Ohio private colleges.
- **50 Best Christian Colleges** - <http://www.bestcolleges.com/features/top-christian-colleges/>
- **The Whitehouse** - bit.ly/WhiteHouseScore – This is a score sheet that compares the financial proposition of all US colleges.
- **The College Board** – www.collegeboard.com This is the SAT site.
- **ACT** - <http://www.actstudent.org/> This is the ACT site.

Books:

- **The Fiske Guide to Colleges** – Gives real descriptions, not just data. These are available to check out of the College Counseling Office.
- **College Match** – A parent and student guide to selecting a college. Also available for check out.
- **The Insider's Guide to Colleges** – from the Yale Daily Press – Gives student descriptions of colleges.

What Do I Look for in Colleges?

Colleges are a mixture of students, faculty, administration, facilities, and on and off-campus activities. As you are researching the “personality” of a college to see if it will be right for you, make sure to visit while classes are in session. Look for campuses to hold “open houses” or “discovery days” throughout the year. Just remember, colleges are trying to sell themselves to you as much as you are trying to sell yourself to them, so look for the college where you will fit best, not the one who gave you the best t-shirt.

The following is a list of factors that might influence the personality of a campus...it is not a complete list:

- Size of the student body (undergraduate/graduate, full/part time)
- Residential percentage (how many students live on/off campus)
- Geographical mix of students & foreign study opportunities
- Student scheduling & average length of time until graduation
- Minimum & maximum class sizes, who teaches (TA? Professor?)
- Student activities/clubs, leadership opportunities and Greek Life
- Percentage of students returning for Sophomore year & grad rate
- Campus setting (urban, suburban, rural, isolated, etc.)
- Academic offerings
- Athletic programs
- Admission requirements & cost
- Co-Ops and Internships & Study abroad opportunities

The top factors most students consider when looking for “their college” are:

- **Small vs. Large** – colleges can have a few hundred to tens of thousands of students.
- **Geographical location** – how far away do you want to be?
- **City vs. College Town** – how much activity do you want around campus?
- **Field of Study or Major** – Undecided majors are one of the more popular, and although this is OK, it is a good idea to research and evaluate your interests. We want you to have a good general direction before leaving Benedictine. When does your college of choice expect you to declare a major if you enroll as Undecided?
- **Cost** – there is more on this in section 4 and within building a college list. You should NEVER eliminate a college solely based on cost before applying for financial aid.

Building a College List

Building a potential college list starts with online research, talking to an admissions rep, and visiting the school with scheduled talks with faculty, admissions, and financial aid. **This takes time, so start early!**

Use Naviance! This is the best place to keep your college list because we use this information to disseminate information.

The best place to start a college search is using our Naviance system. Log into your Naviance account. Select the **Colleges** tab. Select one of the **College Searches** under the **College Research** heading.

Once you have found a college that interests you, click **Add to List**. This will add it to your **Colleges I'm Thinking About** list that you can then move to your **Colleges I'm Applying To** list later.

VERY IMPORTANT!! All of the colleges you will be applying to **MUST** be added to your Colleges I'm Applying To list, so Mr. McMillin can keep track of where applications materials must be sent. It's OK to add a college to the list that you do not end up applying to, it can be removed later.

- **Diversity** - list of colleges will include all 3 types in this list:
- **Safety** – a college you would enjoy attending where you have at least a high chance of being admitted. These are NOT inferior institutions, and they might offer good merit-based aid!
- **Possible** – a college you would like to attend where you have about a 50-70% chance of being admitted.
- **Reach** – a college you “dream” of attending where you have about a 25-40% chance of being admitted.
- **Cost** – Within each of the above you should have low, medium and high priced schools.

Most students apply to 4-9 colleges. Your list will be completely determined based on what YOU are looking for!! Your list should include ONLY:

- Colleges you would be happy attending.
- Colleges that meet your specific needs (interests, programs, etc.).
- Colleges where you can succeed without being overwhelmed.
- Colleges you have already researched and have or will visit.
- Colleges where you have great potential for growth the next 4 years.

Campus Visit Checklist

There is a printable version of these on our [college website](#)

Find out what you need to do to apply and see if the college's classes and majors are what you want.

- Take part in a group information session at the admission office.
- Interview with an admission officer.
- Pick up financial aid forms.
- Sit in on a class that interests you. If classes aren't in session, just see what the classrooms are like.
- Meet a professor who teaches a subject that interests you.
- Talk to students about what they think of their classes and professors.
- Get the names of the people you meet and their business cards so you can contact them later.

Get a feel for student life and see if this college is a place where you will do well:

- Take a campus tour.
- Talk to current students about life on campus and the college.
- Check out the freshmen dorms and stay overnight with a student, if possible.
- Visit the dining hall, fitness center, library, career center, bookstore and other campus facilities.
- Talk to the coaches of sports that you may want to play.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.

Tune in to learn what's happening on campus and what's on students' minds:

- Listen to the college radio station.
- Read the student newspaper and other student publications.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what daily student life is like.
- Go to the career center and learn what services it offers.
- Browse the school's website and any campus blogs.

Questions to Ask on a Campus Visit

- What activities and services are available to help students get settled (academically and socially) during their first year?
- How big are the classes?
- (Ask students) How easy is it to meet with faculty?
- (Ask students) Are you able to register for the classes you want?
- What is the total cost of attending the college?
- What types of financial aid does the college offer and how do I apply?
- Are all freshmen assigned to an academic advisor?
- Where do most freshmen live?
- What activities are available for students?
- Who teaches the courses for first-year students?
- How successful are the college's graduates in finding jobs?
- What services (such as transportation and shopping) are available locally?
- What is there to do on weekends? Do most students stay or leave campus on weekends?
- What percentage of students return for Sophomore year?
- What percentage of students graduate in four, five, or six years?
- What if I need help in a class? Is there tutoring?
- Are students allowed to have a car on campus?
- What is your Greek life like?
- Do you have intramural sports?
- How safe is campus? What is the security like?
- How often do students typically go home?
- What types of health and counseling services are available?

College Athletes

1. **Check out our NCAA Website for information:**

<http://priory.cbhs.net/bengal/athletics1/ncaa-and-naia-information/>

2. **Be Realistic.**

3. **Be Realistic.**

Understand that because you are a starter or because you might be a star player in high school, you may not be at the top of the college recruiter's list. Talk to your coaches to see what they think about your competing at the collegiate level. College athletics is demanding academically and physically – do your research to find the right fit!

4. **Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center if you want to play Division I or Division II sports.**

- We often think of very large school when we think Division I – OSU, Michigan, UCLA, etc., but there are many DI schools like Xavier, Bowling Green, and Albany.
- Division II schools can also offer athletic scholarships. Only DI and DII can do this, but you must be registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center to qualify.

5. **Take you ACT/SAT at least once your junior year.**

6. **Do as well as you can in school!**

7. **Market Yourself.**

- Talk to you coach about recruitment.
- Put together a recruitment profile and video of your playing.
- Check out recruiting sites like <http://www.ncsasports.org/> that allow you to put together a marketing portfolio for coaches to view. This is a paid site as many recruiting services are!

8. **Expect a college coach's offer in writing.**

- If a college is seriously offering you a scholarship, ask for it in writing.

Students with Learning Differences

1. **You may apply for extra time or other accommodations on the ACT and/or SAT.** Talk to Dr. Polderman about requesting this service. The testing agencies will review your documentation to determine if a particular accommodation is appropriate. Dr. Polderman must complete the forms to apply for ACT/AP/PSAT/SAT accommodations.
2. **Many colleges will have dedicated programs where students can receive accommodations, sometimes at an additional cost.** See the list on the next page for colleges and universities where students receive excellent support. This is not a complete list of all colleges that offer services, but it is a good starter list. You may need to apply to these programs separately from general admission to the college.
3. **Research the Office of Disability Services at each college carefully to see what services are offered and how to take advantage of them.** Most colleges will offer some type of services for students, but students **MUST** advocate for themselves. Schedule a meeting with the Office of Disability Services when you visit colleges!
4. **Apply to colleges and to special programs early.** Applying early allows you to receive as much consideration as is possible and also to take care of gathering any additional paperwork needed: ETR, IEP, 504, medical reports, etc.
5. **Students must become their own advocates to succeed!** Students who would like assistance at college should get to know the people in the Office of Disability Services on a first name basis. It is the **STUDENT'S** responsibility to seek out assistance.

Financial Aid

Financial Aid can come in many different forms depending upon what you qualify for. Basic information is outlined below, but you must fill out the FAFSA for federal, state, and institutional aid and qualify.

Federal Aid: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/>

- Pell Grants (need-based)
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (need-based)
- Perkins Loans (student subsidized loans – interest does not accrue while you are in school, not all colleges participate)
- Direct Loans (student subsidized and unsubsidized loans – unsubsidized loans accrue interest while you are in school)
- Parent PLUS Loans (parent unsubsidized loans)

State Aid: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/sgs>

- [Choose Ohio First](#)
- [Opportunities For Veterans](#)
- [John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program](#)
- [Nurse Education Assistance Loan Program](#)
- [Ohio College Opportunity Grant](#)
- [Ohio War Orphans Scholarship](#)
- [Ohio Safety Officers College Memorial Fund](#)
- [Ohio Third Frontier Internship Program](#)
- [Forever Buckeyes](#)

Institutional Aid: Each college may offer grants and scholarships check their financial aid website for details. Need-based Aid, Merit-based Aid, Athletic Scholarship Special Program Scholarship (Music, Art, etc.)

Corporate or Private Scholarship: These are most likely not renewable from year to year and must be applied for annually. Look at these scholarship locating websites to start your search:

- [Naviance](#) – National Scholarship Search – Search kept by Sallie Mae
- [Naviance](#) – Scholarship List “Local Scholarships that we have gotten”
- [Fastweb.com](#) – I like this one, it’s a pretty big database.
- [www.zinch.com](#) – They double scholarships posted on their site.
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>
- [www.finaid.org/scholarships/](#)
- <https://www.scholarships.com>

College Application Check List

College: _____

Location: _____ Type: Public _____ Private _____

Total Cost per Year (Room, Board, Tuition, Fees): _____

Majors of Interest: _____

Application Deadline:

Early Decision (Binding) _____ Early Action _____ Regular _____

FAFSA Deadline: _____ Date of Visit: _____ Common App? _____

Application Checklist:

- _____ Profile Completed
- _____ Essay Complete (Summer Assignment Senior Year <http://bit.ly/BeneEssay>)
- _____ College Application Checklist reviewed on Colleges Website
- _____ Common App linked with Naviance Account
- _____ Letters of Recommendation Requested

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

- _____ Letters of Recommendation Completed (Teacher Uploaded to Naviance)
- _____ Transcripts Requested (See Transcript Release Form)
- _____ Test Scores Requested (ACT or College Board)
- _____ Payment Completed of Fee Waiver Requested
- _____ Application Submitted

Notes:

Requesting Transcripts & Letters of Recommendation in Naviance

Requesting transcripts is a key part of the application process which is often times overlooked. If Mr. McMillin does not receive this form he will not send transcripts or know you have applied.

Request Transcripts by filling out Transcript Release Form found at:

<http://priory.cbhs.net/bengal/counseling-department/transcript-information/>

- If you are applying to a common app school, you must link the common app with Naviance before transcripts can be sent.
- Please mark if you have submitted your application on the form.
- Mr. McMillin will send the initial transcript, letters of recommendation and counselor forms.
- Mr. McMillin automatically sends mid-term transcripts, to all colleges that have previously received transcripts.
- Final transcripts do not need to be requested. They will automatically be sent to the college you have selected to attend after graduation.

Note: If a student wants to request a transcript for the NCAA, he or she must register on the [NCAA website](#) before requesting transcripts.

Steps to request teacher recommendations in Naviance:

1. From the **Colleges I'm Applying To** list, go to the **Teacher Recommendations** section.
2. Click the **Add/Cancel Requests** link.
3. Choose a teacher from the drop-down menu
4. Enter a personal note, optional. This is a good place to say thank you, but you should ask for the letter IN PERSON FIRST.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for up to four teachers.
6. Click the **Update Requests** button to complete the request.

Getting Top-Notch Letters of Recommendation

Do not wait until the last minute to think about this part of your application. Be prepared to ask for letters and provide information to those you are asking.

1. Think well in advance about who will write your teacher recommendation letter(s). Do they know you well? Have you take a class with them more than once? Who will write the best letter?
2. Choose recommenders as early as possible. We request letters after the 2nd week of school. This will give them plenty of time to write the letter.
3. Complete and copies the Senior Resume to give to the teacher(s) you choose. This is the best way for a teacher to know you in and out of the class.
4. Make sure your parents respond to the request for Parent Brag Sheet.
5. Enter the teacher you are asking into your **Naviance** account under Colleges I Am Applying To.
6. Enter **Mr. McMillin's** information as your school counselor into your **Common App** account. This ensures she will be able to get all counselor recommendation information to your colleges.
7. Make it easy for the teachers! Give them everything they need to complete the letter, including instructions, where you are applying, and deadlines. They will then check their **Naviance** accounts to upload your letter when it is done.
8. Follow up on the deadlines! You do not want to be pushy, but you need to make sure the recommendations are being done in time. Check **Naviance** to see if a teacher has uploaded and Mr. McMillin has sent your letter.
9. Be grateful! Maintain a positive relationship by showing your gratitude after the process is complete.

The Common Application Instructions

(adapted from The Ultimate Step-by-Step Guide to the New 2013 Common App by Susanna Cerasuolo)

1. Log into **www.commonapp.org**.
2. Create an account and write down your username (use your school email address!) and password somewhere safe.
3. Click on **College Search**. If you don't know your schools you can use the Search tool; if you do know your list of schools, you can just enter the names. Select the college from the **Result List** and then click **Add**. Click **Result List**, then click **Criteria** to add another school.
4. Once you have added all of the colleges you like (remember, you will have to pay an app fee for each college on the list that has one), click **Dashboard** and you will see your colleges list.
5. Click **My Colleges**. The first college in the list will be open. You will see 4 things under each school: **Questions**, **Assign Recommenders**, **Submission**, and **Writing Supplement**. (Why Submission isn't listed last is beyond me, because it's certainly the last thing you want to do.)
6. Don't start the Questions yet, but you can glance at them. Instead, click **Writing Supplement** and work on creating a list of all writing prompts you will need by copying/pasting each prompt for this college, AND its word or character limit, onto a word doc so you know exactly what essays you need to write, how long or short they must be, and which ones overlap and can be reused. Do not compose your essays in the Common App. You will compose and edit your essays on a word doc. Do this for all of your schools.
7. I know you'll want to poke around in the Common App for a while, so go ahead, but don't spend hours right now filling in all the questions, because what you really need to do first is start every rough draft of every little essay you need to do—there might be 15! Filling in Common App data is easy and starting rough drafts is difficult, so do the drafts first.

8. After you have created your list of prompts and determined which essays can be recycled, and after you have started all rough drafts, THEN you can fill out the **Questions** section for each college or you can fill out the **Common App** section.
9. **Common App:** This section is pretty straightforward. Items with a red asterisk are required. Enter the data and you can click Continue or just click on the next section; it auto saves. The little green checks appear in places where that section is technically done—but this is NOT exactly true from your standpoint! The checks mean that the section is either complete (by you) or that the data isn't required in order for you to submit the Common App. I suggest you fill in the **Activities** section, which isn't required and gives you a misleading little green check. Fill it out!
10. **Submitting:** When the Common App section has 6 green checkmarks, and when a college in the **My Colleges** section has 3 checkmarks: 1. Questions, 2. Assign Recs & FERPA (Recommenders will be assigned by you in **NAVIANCE NOT in COMMON APP!**), and 3. Writing Supplemental, THEN you are ready to click "Submission – Common App" for that college. You will submit your applications one at a time, when each college is ready. You will need to complete the 6 sections of the Common App before you can submit the first college application, but (it is my understanding) that you can go back and edit your Common App for future schools after you submit it to a college.

** This publication was the most up-to-date information available at the time. Changes may occur in the format of the Common App from year to year.