

MODULE #5: College Application Process

Objectives

- Participants will be able to learn about the college application process including transcripts, admission essays, extracurricular activities, resumes, and letters of recommendations.
- Participants will be able to practice college admission interview questions.
- Participants will learn about effective college admission essays.

Context



Students need to spend enough time learning about how to prepare their college application. There is some information that students need to enter on their application such as educational background, test scores, academic experience, extracurricular activities, recommendations from teachers and counselors, official transcript, and etc.

Handouts & Resources Needed:

Handout 5.1A: Preparing for College
Handout 5.1B: Preparing for College
Handout 5.2A: College References
Handout 5.2B: Sample Student Resume
Handout 5.3: College Essay Writing Resources
Sheet of paper – one for each participant
Pen/pencils
Journals

Activity#1: College Application Workshop (55 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Tell participants that they should allow plenty of time to work on their college applications. Therefore, there are some things to keep in mind before they get started.
- Then facilitator will distribute two handouts: Preparing for College (Handout 5.1A) and (Handout 5.1B) to participants.
- Break into small groups.
- Have participants look through the handouts.
- Ask participants to write down all extracurricular activities in which they have been or are involved from 9th through 12th grade.
- Have participants use the categories on Handout 5.1C to help them organize their list of activities and experiences during their academic year.

Activity#2: Letter of Recommendation (55 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Letters of recommendation play a significant role in the college admission process. Admissions officers rely on letters of recommendation to know how the recommenders view the applicant. Therefore, it is suggested that students choose those recommenders who know them well so that the recommendations make lasting impressions upon the admissions officers.
- Tell participants to follow the tips in Handout 5.2A for getting the best letters of recommendation for college admission.
- Have participants list at least three people (ex: teacher, counselor) who know them well to write a letter of recommendation.
- Engage participants in a role-play: Facilitator should play the role as the recommender and the participants should play the role as the recommended to prepare them regarding how to solicit recommendations.
- Continue discussion: If recommenders do not know participants well, participants should write a student resume, which can help their recommenders to write their letters of recommendation for them (Handout 5.2B).
- Tell participants during the Career Awareness Module that they will have a chance to create a resume, but encourage them to think about it now.
- Tell participants that they should keep their resume to one page.
- Have participants make a list of any extracurricular, work experiences, and opportunities they have had.
- Facilitator will encourage participants to follow the tips of the handout and to contact their recommenders in advance so that they can have enough time to write the best letter of recommendation.
- Debriefing

Activity#3: College Essay's (30 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Many colleges and universities require a college admission essay, which gives students the opportunity to stand out among the applicants and to prove that they are the most deserving candidates. A college essay allows admission officers to get to know the candidate a little better; therefore, it is important for the student to have enough time to write an exceptional essay.
- Tell participants that:
 - The essay question may be direct and ask you to choose something about yourself to discuss, or
 - The essay may be indirect and require you to write about something such as an event, book, or quotation.
- Then, tell participants that colleges look for:

- Your preferences.
 - Your values.
 - Your thought process.
- Provide College Essay Writing Resources (Handout 5.3) to participants.
- Ask participants to check out the resources to help them find tips for making their college essay sound great.
- Lastly, advise participants that:
 - No answer is wrong, but sloppy, general, insincere, or tasteless responses can hurt your application status.
- Debriefing

Handout 5.1A

Preparing for College

As you prepare for your final year of high school, you should start planning how you are going to navigate the college admissions process. Here are some tips to help give you a jump-start on the race to the ivory tower:

- Find something to do over the summer – Do not sit around and squander your entire summer. Get a job, college is expensive, and every little bit of money helps. If you do not want to work, try to find a program offered by your school or other group that will allow you to advance yourself academically and socially. Colleges look highly upon these extra programs.
- Start narrowing down your choices – By this time you have probably been inundated by college letters from schools across the country. Now is the time to start narrowing down your list of prospective colleges. Look through course catalogues, try to arrange campus visits, and see which colleges offer programs that interest you.
- Try to obtain a copy of previous college applications in order to get a feel for what is to come.
- Start writing practice essays. In many instances, the difference between admittance and rejection is an interesting essay that catches the school's eye.
- Register for the SAT (and perhaps ACT, SAT II). You can take these tests multiple times, so start early to try and get the best score possible.
- Start lining up individuals to write recommendation letters. A good recommendation letter from a teacher, a boss, or any other qualified adult (no one from your family) can make a strong impression on the admissions committee.
- If you do not already have one, compose a resume that has all your activities and achievements. If you wait until the last minute, you will forget some of the things you have done in high school. Every trophy or award should be noted.
- Finally, make sure to have a good time this summer. Your senior year (especially the first half) is going to be extremely stressful. While it is important to get a head start on the admissions process, take time out to enjoy yourself. This will be one of the last summers that you will get to spend with your friends, make it count.

HANDOUT 5.1B

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

Getting yourself ready for college does not have to wait until your junior year of high school. You can begin as early as middle school. When you reach high school, your school counselor should assist you in choosing classes, but use this guideline put together by the US Department of Education for classes in high school to prepare yourself for college:

1. 4 years of English
2. 4 years of Math (algebra, geometry, trigonometry, pre-calculus)
3. 2 -3 years of History and geography, laboratory sciences (biology, chemistry, earth science) and foreign language (Spanish, French, Italian, German, Latin)
4. 1 year of performing or visual arts
5. Some challenging electives such as; economics, psychology, computer science or statistics.

If any of these courses are offered at your middle school, you might want to begin taking them. If you are already in high school and are missing classes you may want to consider going to summer school to help you get ahead. Your chances of getting into college are much better with these classes and you will be glad that you took the time to do this.

Activities and Experiences

Academic honors

Department awards – department, academic year

Academic awards – year

National Honor Society

Other – title, description, year

Athletics

Sports – position, leadership (if any), year

Honors and Awards – title, description, year

Extracurricular activities in school

List in order of significance, either in terms of time commitment or achievement

Position, activity, time (hrs/wk), year

Special Honors or Awards

Extracurricular activities outside of school

Volunteer or community service – description, duties, number of hours/year

Work experience

Job title (list most recent first) – duration, position, responsibilities, year

Non-work summer experiences

Summer school, camps, etc.

Experience, description, duration, year

Travel

Location, duration – (one line description)

Interest and hobbies

Skills acquired, duration, year

College References

It is never too early to begin thinking about who you would like to write your college reference letter. Make sure the person you ask knows you well enough to not only discuss your academic skills, but also someone who knows you on a somewhat personal level and can positively discuss your ability to achieve future goals. Always ask that person if they feel they know you well enough to give a positive reference. Do not assume that just because you had a good grade in a class that the teacher will give you a good recommendation.

Key points you may want to follow when requesting a recommendation letter:

- ◆ Provide them with a written list of all and any extracurricular activities, work experiences and opportunities you have had.
- ◆ Consider preparing a brief essay or statement outlining your goals as well as any personal struggles you have gone through. Although the person may already know this information it could serve as a reminder for them since they may be writing several letters for other students. If they include this information in the recommendation it makes your application look cohesive and solid.
- ◆ Provide them with the envelopes already addressed to the college with enough postage. If you do this, you will know they are sent to the right place in a timely manner.
- ◆ Spend a few minutes with the person to go over any questions they may have.
- ◆ Send a Thank You letter! This is very important, especially if you want to make yourself stand out from the rest of your classmates. The best time to send the letter is right after you have been accepted to a particular college. You can formally thank them and let them know of your success.

Handout 5.2B

Sample Student Resume

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip
Phone
Email, if applicable

High School

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Graduation Date
Current GPA
Test Scores

Month, Year
3.0
SAT I: August 2002
Verbal score/Math score

Academic Honors

Honor Roll 1999-2002
Academic Achievement Award, 2001
National Honor Society, May 2000

Athletics
Activities

Soccer 1999-present
ASPIRA Club, September 1999-2001
Volunteer, spring 2000-2002
Randolph Nursing Home, MD

Part-Time Work

2 hours per week
Cashier/Sales, July 2000-August 2001
Barnes & Noble

Major Goals

To major in education or special education
(optional, if you know your major)

Interests

Reading, walking, and sports

Handout 5.3

College Essay Writing Resources

1. <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/index.html>
2. <http://www.ohiou.edu/esl/english/writing/index.html>
3. <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/collegeapplications/a/essaytopic.htm>
4. <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/essays/>
5. <http://ga.collegeadmissionessays.com/>