

Getting Into College

Adapted from "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Getting into College"

Junior/Senior Seminar

Hatboro-Horsham High School

Part 1

1. What is College and Why Should You Go?

- What do you think college is?
- What's in it for you?
- Why go?

Pop Quiz (Don't Panic)

Choose one of the following answers to the question: What is college?

- A place to develop certain academic and social skills.
- A place where I can meet people I might not otherwise meet if I didn't attend.
- A place where I can earn a degree.
- A place to spend between 3 & 7 years of my life.
- A place generally different from a "University."
- All of the above.

A Place to Develop Certain Academic and Social Skills

- You can explore many different academic subjects.
- You can improve your thinking, writing, speaking, and study skills.
- You will gain your own sense of independence.
- You will be learning and living with people of diverse ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds.
- You will learn to cope with peer pressure.

A Place Where I Can Meet People I Might Not Otherwise Meet

- Absolutely true!
- Socially, ethnically and economically diverse.
- Students come from every corner of the college's state, sometimes from across the nation, and sometimes from around the world.

A Place Where I Can Earn a Degree

- You **CAN**—but aware...
 - Approximately 60 to 80 percent of students who begin their college careers at a particular college leave that college before earning a degree.
 - Why? Some transfer to another school, other's feel they have enough experience and go on their merry way. Yet others are dismissed for academic or behavioral issues. Some leave because they can't afford to continue.
 - Graduating from college requires a higher level of work, commitment and discipline than high school.

A Place to Spend between Three and Seven Years of My Life

- The amount of time you spend in college varies based on your academic focus, scholastic ability and social and academic interests.

A Place Generally Different from a "University"

- Generally speaking, colleges have fewer students than universities.
- Many universities divide academic programs into groups and refer to them as colleges (College of Education, College of Engineering, etc.)
- The main difference is that most universities offer graduate programs and most colleges do not.

So Why Do You Want to Attend?

- Remember this...
 - “College” can mean different things to different people.
 - It’s time for you to figure out what college means (or is going to mean) to you.

2. A Field Guide to Colleges

- Two Year (AKA junior and community colleges)
- Four Year--offer Bachelor's degrees (B.A., A.B., B.F.A., and B.S.)
Some also offer Masters degrees (M.A., M.S., M.Ed., etc.)
Doctorate degrees (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.), and Professional degrees (J.D., M.D., etc.)

Two-Year or Junior/Community College Advantages

- They are far less expensive than 4 yr colleges.
- You may be able to live at home—if you consider that an advantage.
- You can “try on” the idea of college without making a big commitment.
- You may be able to attend part-time while working full or part time.
- You can improve your academic skills before tackling a four-year college.

Four-Year Colleges (Bachelor's degrees) Advantages

- You may have the chance to live on campus with a variety of people.
- You can focus full-time on your intellectual and social development.
- You may be able to dabble in different, interesting subject areas while you earn the degree that best fits your future goals.

One Size Doesn't Fit All

- Small colleges (20 to 3,000 students)
 - Everybody knows everybody
 - Class sizes are small so everyone gets to participate (no one can hide either!)
 - Local examples: Haverford, Bryn Mawr, Swarthmore
- Mid-sized colleges (3000 to 10,000 students)
 - More social and academic options than smaller colleges.
 - Class size for intro classes larger than small colleges.
 - Local examples: Villanova, St. Joseph's, West Chester

One Size Doesn't Fit All (continued)

- Large colleges (with 10,000 or more students) generally offer more of everything: more classmates, more courses to choose from, more beer and many more extracurricular activities.
- Local examples: University of Pennsylvania, Penn State University (Main Campus), Temple University

A (Dorm-) Room with A View (the environment around the campus)

- Urban colleges—
located in a major city
 - There's always
somewhere to go,
something to do,
something to distract
you from studying.
 - Some urban colleges:
NYU, Penn, Drexel,
Temple, Boston
University

A (Dorm-) Room with A View (the environment around the campus)

- Suburban colleges—
near but not in the
middle of a city.
- More campus
atmosphere, many
social and cultural
opportunities are
available nearby.
- Examples: University
of Richmond,
Villanova, St. Joe's

A (Dorm-) Room with A View (the environment around the campus)

- Small-town colleges—typically in close community with the local community.
- Most social and cultural activities are on campus.
- Kutztown, Millersville, Ursinus.

There's No Place Like Home

- A college less than one hour away—usually less expensive. Students that have strong connections to home find this desirable.
- Between 1 & 5 hour drive home—is great if you are seeking more independence but want to come home on a weekend once in awhile.
- Far away—a plane ride. Great if you are looking for a whole new set of experiences (climate, atmosphere, traditions, and local “flavor.”)

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Liberal Arts Colleges
 - Provides a strong balance of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences.
 - They are interested in developing your breadth of knowledge, not career preparation.
 - Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr, Haverford.

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Comprehensive Colleges
 - Offer a mixture of liberal arts programs and pre-professional programs (business, engineering, education)
 - Georgetown, Purdue, Syracuse.

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Specialization or Pre-Professional Colleges
 - Arts (Julliard School, Rhode Island School of Design)
 - Business (Bentley College, Babson College)
 - Engineering (Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology)

Other “Flavors” to Consider

- Women’s colleges—committed to the personal, social and academic development of women. Extensive opportunities for leadership and independence.
 - Smith, Bryn Mawr, Wellesley

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Men's colleges—
focus on the personal,
social and academic
development of men.
Tradition is critical in
this environment.
 - Hampden-Sydney
College, Wabash
College, Northwestern
College

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Religious Colleges—
basically liberal arts colleges with varying degrees of required religious course-work and extra curricular religious activities.
 - Grove City College,
Brigham Young,
College of Holy Cross

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Black colleges
 - Focus on the personal, social and academic development of African-American students. Extensive exposure to the culture. Strong focus on civil rights, equality and justice.
 - Howard, Morehouse

Other "Flavors" to Consider

- Military/Service Academies
 - Primary focus is on military and science-oriented fields. Physical fitness and training are strongly emphasized. Government pays the bill!
 - West Point, US Naval Academy

What's Your Style?

- Select criteria based on your interests, not those of your friends, your teachers, or parents.
- Be aware that you must carefully start to explore the many different types of colleges—SOON!

3. Who Am I?

Why ask “why”?

Questions to ask.

What to do with the answers.

The Value of Asking Yourself Questions

- Goals
- Education
- Activities and Interests
- The World Around You
- Your Personality
- Worksheet—Who Am I?

The Value of Asking Yourself Questions

- Remember this...
 - Asking questions of yourself helps you more clearly define your goals and objectives.
 - These questions and answers may lead you to more questions and answers. That's not bad—it's good.
 - It's enjoyable to explore these new avenues. You'll soon realize that figuring it all out is an ongoing process, and it's never over.

4. Finding a College That Fits

Admission issues

Financial considerations

Academic questions

What about after graduation?

Academic Issues

- Atmosphere: Is the scholastic atmosphere rigorous, demanding, relatively easy, easy, or ridiculously easy?
- Programs: Does the college offer particular majors or programs of interest to you?
- Advising system: How is the academic advising system set up at this college?

Academic Issues

- Cooperative programs: Does this college give students the opportunity to work for credit?
- Core requirements: What are the basic course requirements that all students must take?
- Faculty: Are they full-time? Teaching undergraduates? % tenured? Quality of teaching?

Academic Issues

- Grading system: Traditional (A,B,F), pass/fail, evaluation-based?
- Independent study possible?
- Methods of instruction: lecture, discussion, seminar, etc.?
- Off-campus study opportunities: Does this college have agreements with other institutions so that students may also enroll at other colleges?

Academic Issues

- Student-faculty relations: How much and how often students and faculty interact both inside and outside of class.
- Study-abroad programs: What options are offered by this college to study-abroad? When do most students study-abroad?

Admission Issues

- Admission criteria: What are the college's specific requirements in terms of grades, class rank, SAT I & II, and ACT scores?
- Application deadline: When do you have to apply and when do you find out if you got in?
- Family relationship with the college: Are you a legacy?
- Rolling admission

Features of the College

- Affiliation and control of the college
- Athletic programs
- Calendar
- Campus setting
- Class size
- Community involvement
- Competition level
- Consortia

Features of the College

- Counseling services
- Crime
- Distance from home
- Diversity
- Extracurricular offerings
- Facilities
- Gender composition
- Greek issues

Features of the College

- Housing options
- Internships
- Learning disability programs and services
- Neighborhood
- Political environment
- Safety
- Size of freshman class
- Social life

Features of the College

- Tutorial services
- Type of college

Financial Issues

- Cost: What is the total cost for the year?
 - Tuition
 - Room
 - Board
 - Books
 - Fees
 - Supplies
 - Transportation
 - Miscellaneous

Financial Issues

- Financial assistance
 - What programs are available to fund your education?
 - What types of scholarships are available?
 - How does this college treat “outside” scholarships?
 - Are these funding options based on need or merit?
 - Does the college guarantee to meet the need of all accepted?
 - How do you apply for financial assistance?

After-College Issues

- Alumni: What types of employment networking programs exist at the college?
- Job opportunities: Does the college provide information about summer and full-time job opportunities? Career services? What % of graduates last spring were employed the following September?
- Graduate schools: What % of students apply and are admitted to graduate schools?

Policy Issues

- Cars
- Dress code
- Student behavior

Other Issues: Everything Else

- Freshmen attrition
- Interest of the student body
- Religious affiliation and facilities
- Weather

Summing Up

- It's up to you to customize the criteria list for yourself.
- Choose 15 or so—ask your parents to do the same and compare lists.
- Worksheet—College Criteria

5. Making a List and Checking It Twice

Q & A

Using your resources

Covering your bases

Where Do I Start Finding Colleges?

- People you know—parents and family members, friends who've been through the process, teachers and guidance counselors are a good place to start.
- It is critical that you carefully explore data and info on your own—life-affecting decisions are best made by the person whose life is being affected: That would be you!

Are There Any Special Tools to Help in Your Search?

- Your high school counselor!
- The Internet!
- My Road—see Mrs. Lake for your password!
- The Career Room
- Our classroom lab
- Your local library

How Many Colleges Should I Put on My First List?

- Let your criteria be your guide. 10-30 colleges that meet your criteria might be a good number.
- A college should probably meet a minimum of 10 to 15 of your criteria to make your list.
- Worksheet—Initial College List

Covering a Range of Colleges

- A Reach: colleges where you have a less than 50/50 chance of acceptance.
 - You may fall a bit short on your standardized test scores, your GPA, class rank or course selection.
 - Reaches are the *dream* colleges.
 - If you are off by only a few points or places in class rank (for example), your acceptance might not be a long reach. Your initial list should include a few reach schools!

Covering a Range of Colleges

- In the Ball Park: Colleges where you have a 50/50 chance of admission.
 - Based on your current test results, GPA, class rank and course selection, you have an even chance of admission.
 - Most of the colleges on your list should/will fall into this category.

Covering a Range of Colleges

- Looks Good: Your chance of being admitted in this category is better than 50/50.
 - These are hard to select because there will be many of them.
 - The important idea here is to select a few colleges where you would be happy to enroll.

Which College Goes in Which Category?

- Use your counselor's information heavily in determining how difficult or easy a college would be for you to get into.
- You should be able to get a rough idea of how you match up.

Now What?

- Start out with a number of colleges in each of the three categories!
- “Fit” and “range” are critical. Each college should have an excellent reason for being on your list.
- This is your first list: It will grow, it will shrink. It’s almost alive! It will change.

Three Steps to the Admission Process

1. What schools should I explore?
2. Where should I apply?
3. Where should I go?

You are about to enter
step #1!

Think big!!!

6. Finding Accurate Info

The scoop from the colleges

The dirt on the colleges

Resources, resources, resources!

- Information is power!
 - Books: Mostly objective—they aim for balance.
 - People: People have personal prejudices, biases, and experiences that may tilt their opinions of a specific college.

Information from the Colleges

- Official Literature
- Unofficial Literature: campus newspaper(s), generally they offer a view that is at least as accurate than the college's own publications.
- Talk: Tone of voice (on the phone), facial expression and body language (in person)
- The staff in the admissions office.

Information from the Colleges

- Alumni
- Study the Students
- Your guidance counselor
- Parental Advisory

Information about the Colleges

- See our Career Room: Ask to see the following books.
 - *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*
 - *College Board's The College Handbook*
 - *Lovejoy's College Guide*
 - *Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges*

*these guides provide profiles such as class size, expenses, academic requirements, sports programs, academic majors, services, application procedures and tons more!

Information about the Colleges

- See our Career Room: Ask to see the following books.
 - *The Selective Guide to Colleges*
 - *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges*
 - *The Princeton Review Guide to the 286 Best Colleges*
 - *The 100 Best Colleges for African-American Students*
- *These books offer reviews of colleges from current students and/or reviewers.

Remember this:

- Never underestimate the value of written material and people as resources.
- Information from the college is meant to be appealing. Don't assume it's objective.
- Information about the college may be both objective and subjective—both have value.
- Information is power! Get all you can.

7. Why does my Mailman Hate Me?

Keep those cards and letters
coming

Dialing for information

It's Free!

- View books
- Course catalogs
- Posters
- Departmental brochures
- DVD's

All this can be yours; send an email and ask!

It's Free!

- You can also request information on:
 - Financial aid
 - Application for admission
 - Academic majors and/or departments
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Campus-visitation programs
 - Names of any graduates in our area

It's Free! Help...

- When you email the college admission office, you will be requested to provide some or all of the following information:
 - First Name, Last Name
 - Address
 - Telephone number
 - Name of high school (Hatboro-Horsham)
 - Year in high school
 - Any academic interest
 - Any extracurricular interest

It's Free! Help...

- If the material does not arrive in a timely manner (one or two weeks), you can call the admissions office and explain that you have not received the material.

How the Mailing Game Works

- Colleges buy mailing lists from the company that creates the PSAT, SAT, ACT and AP exams.
 - If you checked off interests on any of these forms/tests concerning academic interest or other interests your name can be bought by a college.
 - Your poor mailman may deliver 200-300 brochures to your home, colleges send out a steady stream of unsolicited mail.

What To Do When the Mail Come Marching in

- Burn it
- Report these people to the proper authorities
- Open a college information bureau
- *Sort through the stuff*

You might be surprised to find that some of the mail is from colleges that match your criteria!

Scheduling a Painless Campus Visit

How to schedule the visit

Things to do

When to do them

How To Schedule a Campus Visit

- Plan ahead!
- Budget Your Time On-Campus
- Never Schedule a Campus Visit by Mail or email—Call!
- Have a Particular Time and Date in Mind, But Be Flexible
- Weekday Visits Are Preferable to Weekends

How To Schedule a Campus Visit

- Schedule your first interview as a practice session
- Should you bring anything?
- Interview, then tour? Tour, then interview?
- How long will it take?
- Should you choose an individual or group interview?

How To Schedule a Campus Visit

- What did you say your name was?
 - Ask for the name of the person scheduling your interview
 - Ask for the name of the person who will be conducting your interview—make sure that you are interviewing with a *professional admissions staff* member.

How To Schedule a Campus Visit

- Ask about Special Visitation Days or Weekends
- Get It in Writing—ask for written confirmation of your upcoming visit.
- Take a Pause for the Cause—this is stressful, schedule family fun between visits
- The best time to visit? Summer!
- What about Return Visits?
- Telephone Checklist

9. Dress Socks with Sandals and Other Faux Pas

Get ready for your Interview

Fashion do's and don'ts

Finishing touches

What to Wear?

1. Image Is Important—neatness, grooming and your general behavior (politeness) show that you want to make a good impression.
2. Neatness Is the Key—clean, pressed, combed
3. Comfort Is Important, Too

Some Suggestions—for Guys

- Slacks, not a suit—it's an interview not a funeral
- A sport coat or sweater (if cool)
- A dress shirt, neatly pressed
- A pair of shined, comfortable shoes
- A tie...is not necessary!

Some Suggestions—for Gals

- A comfortable ironed dress or suit
- Or a blouse and skirt or slacks
- A sweater if it's cool
- Comfortable shoes

What not to Wear

- Jeans of any kind
- Shorts
- Overly tight slacks or pants
- T-shirts, especially the ones with cute or hip sayings
- Athletic shoes
- Hats

What not to Show

- Cleavage
- Too much midriff
- Too much leg
- Your underwear (this applies to guys as well as gals)
- Don't wear too much cologne/perfume/make-up

Before the Interview

- Carefully review all material from and about the college
- Thoroughly review the reasons why you are visiting this one
- Cite examples of features that appeal to you from the college's materials
- Create a journal to help you differentiate your interview preparations for each college.
- Journal