

# Redcol College Counseling Handbook

*How to navigate the college admissions process  
and get into your “best-fit” university*



CHOOSE  
YOUR FUTURE



Dear students and families,

It is with great pleasure that I share with you this College Counseling Handbook. Our team - high school psychologists, international college counselors, and myself, Redcol's Director of Education - worked hard to put together this resource to help guide you through the college admissions process. This is an emotional time - there are a lot of hopes and expectations, a lot of unknowns, and that means, a little bit of fear and stress as well. This is all normal and a part of the journey, but we hope that this handbook and the support of our team will help to ease some of the tension and allow you to really enjoy each step along the way.

Our vision is that ***all Redcol students will attend a 'best-fit' college or university - a school aligned to their unique talents, interests, experiences, and needs - so that they may be one step closer to achieving the future they envision for themselves.***

To achieve this vision, we are committed to supporting each student in this process through the delivery of key information (like that found in this handbook), workshops and talks, one-on-one meetings, and individual assignments for the student to complete (yes, this is a euphemism for homework). There is a lot of work to be done but we hope you will find it exciting. Students will be reflecting on who they are, who they want to be, and how they will make their mark on the world, and then applying their conclusions to the college admissions process. Parents will probably discover a lot about their children as well through some of the conversations and reflections that we will invite you to participate in. Open communication is going to be important - between students, parents, and the school - but the person owning this process must be the student. Parents, counselors, and teachers may share opinions and offer guidance; however, it is the student who will be going on to college upon graduation and it is he or she who must be motivated and committed to this next chapter. Organization is also going to be important; use a calendar to keep track of important dates and assignments, set aside time for this work, create a space to save documents and digital information from universities as well as a folder for any papers or materials collected at college fairs, university visits, and more. All of this will result in a more fluid and successful experience overall.

In this handbook, you will find more information about the Redcol College Counseling team and what you can expect from us. Additionally, you will find a timeline or checklist of recommended steps to follow for a successful admissions process, followed by more detailed information about finding the best colleges and universities for you. Finally, we share a list of additional resources on this process; there are a ton of great free resources

and some excellent books. And, if you have a question and cannot find the answer, our team is here to help.

We are so looking forward to the road ahead and cannot wait to see what university or college each student chooses to attend as the next step towards the future of their dreams.

Warm regards,



Kate Cottrell

Director of Education &  
Head of College Counseling  
Redcol Holding

## REDCOL COLLEGE COUNSELING - MEET THE TEAM

While our team works together to continuously improve our collective knowledge and skill base, one member of our team is stationed at each school. This person is either a high school psychologist or an international college counselor. In either case, he or she is your first point of contact for all things related to professional orientation and college admissions counseling.

On each campus, the Redcol College Counseling team member will work with the school staff to implement the Choose Your Future program that includes but is not limited to workshops for students from grades 6 through 12, training for teachers, talks and workshops for parents, one-on-one meetings with students and families, and visits with colleges and universities. In schools where there is a school psychologist, students will also be assigned an international college counselor who is located on another campus. The international college counselor will virtually support students and families with the admissions process to colleges and universities outside of Colombia.

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## GENERAL TIMELINE

### Preschool & Primary School

- PARENTS: Start saving now so that finances are not the deciding factor when choosing a university.
- PARENTS: Use the time to develop a love of learning and a love of reading in your child.

### Middle School

- Explore! Participate in different extracurricular activities, clubs, sports, and more to discover what you love!
- English immersion. Participate in the 6th Grade trip to Canada
- Develop your study and testing skills
- Prepare for High School. Look ahead at what you can expect in high school: classes, standardized tests, opportunities such as extracurriculars, summer camps, and more.
- Strengthen your leadership skills: Participate in the 8th grade trip to the UK to learn about how to identify what most interests you and develop skills to lead in those areas.
- Participate in the Student & Parent Workshops offered each year.

### 9th grade

- Participate in the Student & Parent Workshops: **College Counseling 101 and Introduction to the Maia Learning platform**
- Participate in our Choose Your Future webinar series, with experts speaking on different topics each month.
- Use Maia Learning to explore their strengths, passions, and how they connect to possible career interests.
- Understand GPA: Colleges and universities will see grades beginning in 9th grade; take time to understand how to calculate your average.
- Get more involved in the activities that you enjoy, developing your leadership skills
- College Counselors provide group programming as well as individual appointments upon request

### 10th grade

- Participate in the Student & Parent Workshops: **College Counseling 101, Introduction to Maia Learning, and All You Need To Know About College Applications**

- Participate in our Choose Your Future webinar series, with experts speaking on different topics each month.
- Use Maia Learning to begin exploring colleges and universities with programs related to their career interests
- Take the PSAT10 in March/April
- College Counselors provide group programming and individual appointments upon request
- Volunteer in the college and university fairs at your school as an usher
- Participate in college visits to national universities in Bogotá, Medellín y/o Cali, in addition to your local universities if you live outside of these cities; additionally, consider participating in international college visits
- Participate in the Choose Your Future series and other programming shared by the College Counselor and the Choose Your Future team

### 11th grade

- Participate in the Student & Parent Workshops: **College Counseling 101, Introduction to Maia Learning, All You Need To Know About College Applications, and Application Boot Camp**
- Participate in our Choose Your Future webinar series, with experts speaking on different topics each month.
- Meet with their College Counselor after November 15th to discuss college lists and testing timeline
- Use Maia Learning to narrow down your college choices and begin organizing the components of your applications
- Participate in college and university fairs both on and off campus
- Participate in college tours to national universities in Bogotá, Medellín y/o Cali, in addition to their your universities if you live outside of these cities; additionally, you are invited to consider visiting international colleges and universities
- Take the TOEFL in May.
- Consider taking the SAT and use the results to make decisions about college selection, study options, and retesting, if necessary
- Participate in the Choose Your Future series and other programming shared by the College Counselor and the Choose Your Future team
- Use the summer break to work on key components of your college applications such as your résumé, essays, and brag sheet for letters of recommendation

### 12th grade

## August

- Prepare for your best year ever! The time is going to fly by - so be sure to soak up every minute.
- Start strong - colleges and universities will be making decisions based on your first (and maybe second) trimester grades.
- Participate in the Student & Parent Workshops: **Rising Seniors Night, All You Need To Know About College Applications**
- Schedule an initial meeting with your International College Counselor and/or High School Psychologist. You are invited to have the results of your first assignments so that you can review the information and establish next steps.
- Take the SAT if you are considering options in the United States for undergraduate studies
- Confirm the teachers who will write your letters of recommendation and provide them with the necessary information and the Brag Sheet
- Participate in college fairs, interviews, and virtual (or in-person tours) to continue learning about universities, narrowing down your list, and showing interest in your top schools
- Identify scholarship opportunities at the colleges and universities that you are applying to (this should already be a characteristic that you are considering), in addition to any other external scholarships. Make note of what is required - essays, grades, test results, etc. - and deadlines.
- Draft your first sets of essays
- **Late August/early September.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 2: Topic TBD.

## September

- **For the 2022-2023 School Year, Seniors will take the TOEFL in September.**
- Participate in the Student & Parent Workshops: **Application Boot Camp**
- Inscribirse para el SAT
- Schedule a second meeting with your International College Counselor and/or High School Psychologist. You are invited to have your final list of universities and the deadlines for these applications.
- If you are applying early decision or early action, be sure to complete any paperwork for financial aid as well. FAFSA will only apply to U.S. Citizens, but many colleges and universities will have other forms to fill out, even for international students, such as the CSS or other university-specific requirements.

- Participate in college fairs, interviews, and virtual (or in-person tours) to continue learning about universities, narrowing down your list, and showing interest in your top schools
- **Late September.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 3: Topic TBD.

### **October**

- Take the SAT if you are considering options in the United States for undergraduate studies
- For those applying early decision or early action, schedule a third meeting with your International College Counselor and/or High School Psychologist. You are invited to have all your materials ready for review.
- Participate in college fairs, interviews, and virtual (or in-person tours) in order to continue learning about universities, narrowing down your list, and showing interest in your top schools
- Consider participating in in-person visits to the Colombian universities to which you will be applying
- **Late October.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 4: Topic TBD.

### **November**

- Submit your application to your early decision or early action choice - if you have one.
- Last chance to register for the SAT, which you should take if you are considering options in the United States
- For those applying regular action, schedule a third meeting with your International College Counselor and/or High School Psychologist. You are invited to have all your materials ready for review.
- If you have not yet done so, be sure to complete any paperwork for financial aid as well. FAFSA will only apply to U.S. Citizens, but many colleges and universities will have other forms to fill out, even for international students, such as the CSS or other university-specific requirements.
- Participate in college fairs, interviews, and virtual (or in-person tours) in order to continue learning about universities, narrowing down your list, and showing interest in your top schools
- Submit midyear report with first trimester grades

- **Late November.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 5. Topic TBD.

### **December**

- Take the SAT if you are considering options in the United States for undergraduate studies.
- Finalize your applications for non-Colombian universities and submit your applications before Christmas. If deadlines are in February or later, you may choose to wait a bit longer, but we promise you that it will be a great weight off your shoulders if you do not have to think about this over the holidays.
- Visit the websites of the Colombian universities that you are applying to and make note of the deadlines and requirements for admission

### **January**

- Begin applications to Colombian universities.
- Those applying early decision and early action in the U.S. will begin receiving notification of the schools' decisions. Be sure to review the offer and the financial aid package. Contact the financial aid office with any questions that you have. For Early Decision you will be accepting the offer, as that is the agreement for this type of application. For Early Action, consider the offer but know that you have until May 1 and can wait to see what other schools offer you.
- **Late January.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 6. Topic TBD.

### **February**

- Continue applications to Colombian universities
- Consider scheduling visits to schools that have invited you to enroll.
- **Late February.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 7. Topic TBD.

### **March**

- Continue applications to Colombian universities.
- Consider applying through Concourse as a backup plan for additional non-Colombian university offers.
- Take the Saber 11
- Consider scheduling visits to schools that have invited you to enroll
- Those who applied with regular decision will begin receiving notification of the schools' decisions. Be sure to review the offer and the financial aid package.

Contact the financial aid office with any questions that you have. Make note of deadlines to communicate your decision.

- **Late March.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 8. Topic TBD.

### **April**

- When you decide which school you want to attend, notify that school of your commitment and submit the required financial deposit. Many schools require this notification and deposit by May 1, but for some it is earlier.
- After confirming your commitment to one school, write to each of the other colleges where you were accepted to thank them for admitting you, to decline their offer of admission, and to tell them where you plan to go to college.
- Consider applying through Concourse as a backup plan for additional non-Colombian university offers.
- **Late April.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 9. Topic TBD.

### **May**

- Take your IB exams, giving them your best effort; good scores may be awarded credit and/or scholarships.
- Thank every person that supported you in the admissions process - teachers who wrote a letter of recommendation or reviewed your personal essays, your parents, your college counselor, etc.; a written note is always a nice touch.
- Consider applying through Concourse as a backup plan for additional non-Colombian university offers.
- **Late May.** Participate in the Choose Your Future series, Episode 10. Topic TBD.

### **June**

- Graduate. You did it! Congratulations and the best of luck to you as you continue to choose your future!

## **FINDING YOUR BEST-FIT UNIVERSITY**

It is time to begin looking for your best-fit college or university. Choosing a college is about much more than selecting a major or a career path. There are thousands of colleges and universities, each with a different profile, a different offering. You have received a high-quality education that has made you competitive for schools around the world, which is amazing but also daunting. To find your best-fit university, you must first identify what you want out of

these next four years and then look for schools that will give this to you. The better you know yourself, the better you will be able to home in on what is right for you.

The next few sections will walk you through three big questions that you will want to ask and answer in the selection process:

- Will I fit in?
- Will I get in?
- Can I pay for it?

Before you begin, please pause and breathe and value the person that you are. Finding your best-fit university is about finding schools where you feel comfortable, where you feel free to be yourself, where you feel supported, motivated, and valued, and where you feel you will grow and have the opportunities to do the things you want to do. Some of you may enter into this process with certain big names in mind, which is okay, but we invite you to keep an open mind as well. If that big name school is perfect for you, it will become clear, and if it is not, we know you will find many other great options.

Finally, we invite you to keep two things in mind:

1. There is no perfect college or university. The goal here is to develop a list of places where you will be happy, taking into consideration your talents, interests, needs, and aspirations. This means you should apply to more than one school - we recommend at least one “reach” school, a few schools in your target area, and at least one school that you are very likely to get into, if not guaranteed to get into, as many schools admit those that complete the pre-established requirements. We talk more about these categories in the section, WILL I GET IN?.
2. For EVERY student there are many colleges or universities that are a great fit. You are unique and should be searching for schools that jive with your individuality - we promise that if you follow the timeline of the admissions process and the advice in this handbook, you will find MANY schools that will be a great fit for YOU. This means you should not have a first choice, a second choice, and so on. Instead, you should have a list of first-choice schools; a list of schools where you would feel excited to attend any one of them.

## **WILL I FIT IN?**

The following is a list of characteristics or criteria that form the identity of a school. Take time to consider each one and note which of these characteristics matter most to you so that you can use them to guide your search. This is just a place to start. If you have other characteristics that you know you are looking for, please do not hesitate to include them as well in your search. You want to feel good wherever you choose to study, so begin by identifying what it is that matters to you.

**Career path or major.** Most of you will have identified the program or major that you want to study, in this case, it will be one of the first filters for finding your best-fit university or college. On the other hand, if you are not clear on what you want to study and are looking for the opportunity to receive a liberal arts education and declare a major after a few semesters, there are universities that allow you to declare yourself “undecided” or to do a bit of exploration, both in Colombian and abroad.

**Academic environment.** Here it is important to think about how you learn best or how you would like to learn. Are you open to having large classes or are you looking for smaller classes with more personalized attention? Do you want classes taught by teaching assistants/graduate students or the professor? Are you open to lectures or are you looking for hands-on, experiential learning experiences? This often is related to the size of the university or the number of graduate and doctoral programs, but not always.

**Campus Life - Activities & Sports.** Beyond academics, how do you hope to spend your time? What activities or clubs do you hope to participate in while at the university? Are you looking for a school with a strong community service emphasis? Do you want to play intramural sports? What other interests do you have? Chess, knitting, dance? Maybe you are open to trying something new or maybe it is very important that your favorite hobby is available to you wherever you choose to attend.

**Social and Cultural Environment.** Another aspect of campus life to consider is who you will be socializing with and the cultural environment. Do you want a school where everyone lives on campus or is a commuter community fine with you? Do you long to be part of an intense school spirit where everyone rallies around big school events, such as football or basketball or are you hoping for something more low-key where there are smaller, more specialized events for every walk of life? Maybe you are interested in trying out Greek Life?

Culturally, what are you seeking? Is it important that there is a large international or Spanish-speaking community? Or are you okay being part of a minority group? Is diversity important to you? Do you want to attend a single-sex or co-ed campus? Do you want to

connect with a specific religious community? In what kind of environment are you going to feel comfortable?

**Location.** For some students and families, location is a major factor when choosing a college or university. Maybe you are looking for an adventure, a totally new country or region, or maybe you are not so sure if you are ready to be far from home. Are you hoping for a big city or a town similar in size to where you currently live or are you looking for a change? When considering location, it is also important to think about the cost of flights or transportation and how many times you will realistically be able to see your family per year - studying in Florida will have very different implications than studying in Australia, for example. Climate is another factor to consider. You may be used to sunny, hot days year-round and find yourself considering an excellent school in Canada. Are you prepared for long, snowy winters? Maybe this is something that excites you, maybe this is something that makes you think twice, maybe it does not matter either way - everyone is different.

**Prestige & Big names.** Harvard, Cambridge, Stanford, among others are big names that carry a great level of prestige. With this name recognition also comes an extreme level of selectivity, which means the percentage of applicants admitted each year can go below 5%. If prestige or name recognition is important to you, it will be essential that you also review your profile (academic excellence, high standardized test scores, evidence of leadership and meaningful participation in extracurriculars, etc.) and quickly assess how you can refine it even more. No matter your profile, schools in this category will be on your "reach" list and it will be important to consider other universities and colleges with the other characteristics that you are looking for but with higher acceptance rates.

**Learning support.** At the university level, some schools offer much better academic and emotional support to their students than others. There are offices to assist students in improving their writing or their presentation skills, there are offices that assist students in traditionally challenging courses such as calculus or physics, and there are offices that support students with special learning needs such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and more. Have you taken advantage of such support in your high school, perhaps with the Learning Support Center at your school? Would you like to have access to these supports at college? Do you need these supports? If so, this will be a key variable in the search for your best-fit list and Redcol College Counseling can offer specific guidance around this.

**Career support.** This section began by saying that the college experience is much more than just choosing a major or a career and that is true. At the end of the day, however,

you are continuing your education as an investment in your future. You are investing time, energy, and money to get closer to the future you imagine for yourself; a large part of this future will be the career you choose and thus the job that you have when you graduate. When selecting a college or university, it is important to consider the job prospects of students graduating from the school. What percentage of students have jobs upon graduation from the university or college? What type of jobs? Who are the top employers of graduates from the school? What types of internship opportunities are available to undergraduate students? Research shows that there is a strong correlation between internships and future job prospects, so be sure to look at this<sup>1</sup>. Also, ask about this for the international students at the school. If you cannot get clear answers or there does not appear to be a strong career office, you may want to pass on this school.

### **WILL I GET IN?**

Another big question in the college admissions process is, “Will I get in?” and it is an important one because you want to make sure your list of first choices, otherwise known as your best-fit list, has a good balance of “reach”, “target”, and “likely” schools. These categories all depend on your profile, the profile of a typical student at the school you are looking at, and the selectivity of that school.

This means that when refining your best-fit college list, you should take into consideration at least two things: the profile of the students previously accepted and the acceptance rate (the percentage of students accepted of those that apply). Most schools, and certainly many of the college search resources that we share, will provide information about the most recently admitted class including the SAT scores, GPA, and class rank. Usually, you can find the average, as well as the 25th percentile and 75th percentile, which tells you the range of the middle 50% of those accepted at a given school. This information gives you a marker to which to compare yourself. It is important to note that in some countries grades and test scores are the only information taken into consideration when making an admission decision. In other countries, particularly the United States, the importance of this information varies, and other aspects of the applicant are looked at closely as well including extracurriculars, leadership, personal essays, and letters of recommendations; this is a more holistic approach to the admissions process.

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<sup>1</sup> Lane, C. (2021). 8 Ways Internships Will Boost Your Employability. QS Top Universities. Online. <https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/careers-advice/8-ways-internships-will-boost-your-employability>

The acceptance rate is another statistic you should look up. The acceptance rate at Harvard for 2022 was 3.19%, the lowest in its history, and it is not alone; Brown, Columbia, Yale, and Princeton have also reported acceptance rates at 5% or lower<sup>2</sup>. In this case, even if you have scores in the range of those who were accepted, there is a large group of students who fell within that same range that still were not accepted. Now, consider another example: Wake Forest, ranked 28th in the United States<sup>3</sup>, accepted just under 28%<sup>4</sup> of the students who applied this year. A high-quality school, but chances are significantly better and the closer your scores are to those in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile the greater your chances of being offered a spot at the school.

**Reach, target, likely.** These categories of “reach”, “target”, and “likely” schools will be different for each student depending on the profile of the student. It is important to have a balance of schools so that at the end of the admissions process you have at least one offer from a school that you have identified as one of your first choices. Some students may wonder, why choose a reach school at all? We think that if it is on your best-fit list which means you have done the research and know that you would be happy there because it is a school that offers you the education you are looking for, then you should go for it. The most selective schools are not a guarantee for anyone, but if you fit the profile, why not try? Also, the schools that meet full financial need for all their students, even for international students (the list is not long), are in the category of most selective. Yes, that is right, there are schools that give you the financial aid you need if you get in, but we will get into that in the next section. We want students to set the bar high, but to also have clear that there are best-fit schools for them in all three categories: reach, target, and likely.

Identifying reach, target, and likely schools is not a perfect science, but here are some general rules of thumb:

1. If the school is highly selective with general acceptance rates of 25% or less, it will always be considered a reach school.

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, M.T. (2022). Ivy League Colleges Reveal Acceptance Numbers For Class Of 2026. Forbes Magazine. Online.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltietzel/2022/04/04/ivy-league-colleges-announce-acceptance-numbers-for-class-of-2026/?sh=34021f97625d>

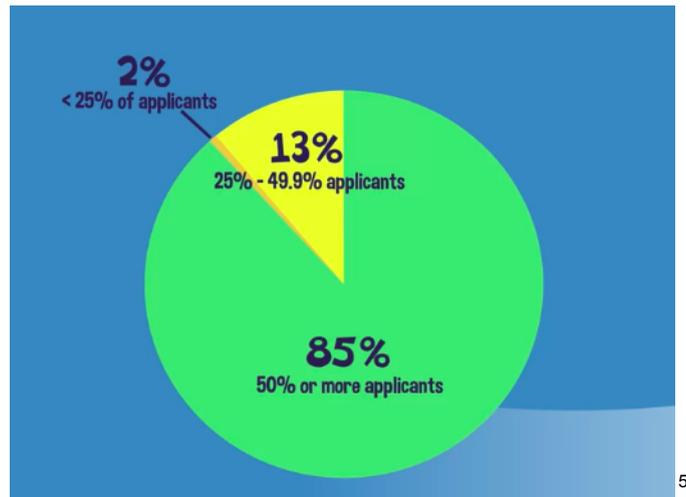
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ivyleagueprep.com/wake-forest-university-class-of-2022/#:~:text=For%20the%20Class%20of%202022,2022\)%20from%2013%2C071%20to%2012%2C900.](https://ivyleagueprep.com/wake-forest-university-class-of-2022/#:~:text=For%20the%20Class%20of%202022,2022)%20from%2013%2C071%20to%2012%2C900.)

2. If your grades and scores (SAT, IB - predicted scores at the time of applying, etc.) fall within the middle 50 leaning more towards the 75th percentile you can consider this a target school.
3. If the school has an acceptance rate above 50% and your scores are towards the 75th percentile or higher, this is probably a school that would fall in the likely category for you. There are also schools that automatically accept anyone who meets their minimum requirements - if that's you, then the school also falls into the likely category.

**A note on selectivity versus quality.** While you must consider a school's selectivity to determine your chances of admission, it is important not to confuse selectivity with quality. Selectivity is about the numbers – the number of students who apply and the number of spots that the school can offer each year. There are many factors that impact the selectivity including name recognition and prestige, often impacted by the university rankings. If you compare the characteristics that you are looking for in your best-fit university, however, with the variables taken into consideration in the formulas used to determine university rankings, you will probably be looking at two very different lists. For example, one variable that often appears in the university ranking formulas is the amount of research or publications produced by the professors. This may have very little impact on the quality of the education you receive and may even negatively affect your education if the professors have graduate students teaching their undergraduate classes. Does this mean that Harvard is not an excellent university? No, but you might be happier with the education you receive from a lesser-known liberal arts college where more attention is given to the undergraduate classes and where you will have more direct contact with your professors. The point is there are a lot of universities that offer high-quality education but are not as selective as some of the big-name schools. It all goes back to what you are looking for and which schools best line up with those characteristics.

To give you some additional perspective, let's look at the numbers presented in the University of Pennsylvania's Coursera course, "Applying to U.S. Universities", a resource we highly recommend taking advantage of if you are interested in studying in the United States. In the graph you will see that the most selective schools, schools that accept less than 25% of the applicants only make up 2% of all the schools in the United States. Schools that accept less than 50% of the applicants, make up 13% of all the U.S. schools. This means that the large majority of colleges and universities in the U.S. accept 50% or more of those who apply.



**Special talents.** Many colleges and universities in the world make acceptance decisions solely on grades and test scores. There are other universities, however, primarily in the United States, that look more holistically at the students applying, which is why they include additional elements in the application such as personal essays, a résumé, and letters of recommendation. These colleges and universities are really looking to accept a class of students with variety and diversity and balance. This is where a special talent - arts and athletics are the big ones - may give you a leg up in the admissions process. If you are an artist, musician, or athlete, it is important to talk with your college admissions counselor about specific opportunities that may apply to you. It is important to note that if you are looking for athletic scholarships, especially in the United States, this process starts early (middle school!) and has a lot of steps and regulations to understand and follow. For artists and musicians looking for scholarship opportunities, you will need a portfolio or an audition. Again, your counselors can support you in better understanding this.

### CAN I PAY FOR IT?

This may be your family’s biggest concern and understandably so. However, it is also important to not limit your search too quickly. Some schools have large ticket prices but offer aid to most of their students, including international students. Other schools offer no aid to international students and have very limited merit-based scholarships. This is an area where it is necessary to be diligent in your research before eliminating a school from your list that checks all your other boxes.

<sup>5</sup> Coursera. “The Realities of Admission: Understanding Options”. Applying to U.S. Universities.

**Ticket price versus price paid.** In the college and university search, you will always find the ticket price, this is the annual cost of tuition. You will also probably find information about the average cost of room and board for living on campus (often a requirement at universities, at least in the first year) and average cost of living and school materials. Now in many, if not most schools, this listed price is NOT what most students are paying. This is where it is important to do your homework and look at the financial aid and merit aid that the schools on your list offer and if price is a major deciding factor for you, this should be a part of the characteristics you are analyzing to determine if a school is on your best-fit list or not. This is not easy to estimate; talk with your counselors for additional guidance.

**Financial aid.** Many universities offer financial aid, or need-based financial assistance, to students and families that demonstrate that they cannot pay the full cost of attendance. This aid may be limited to students who are citizens of the country in which the school is located, but this is not always the case. Schools generally will share either on their website or to those who ask, the percentage of students who received or receive financial aid and the average financial aid package. So, be sure to ask and be sure to specify if you are asking as an international student.

**Need-blind v. need-aware.** When you apply to schools, part of the application may include forms related to your financial need. If you are unable to pay the full price of the school, it is critical that you complete this step and that you submit it on time. For students who have U.S. citizenship and are applying to schools in the United States, this will include the [FAFSA](#). Even citizens who do not currently live in the states, have access to the millions of dollars that the U.S. government makes available for higher education. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you will not fill out this form but you may be asked to complete another form such as the [CSS profile](#) or a form specific to the university. All of these forms provide information to universities about your financial reality and will help the school determine what you can afford.

While it is absolutely necessary that you are honest on these forms, it is also important that you know how universities use this information or when in the admissions process, they look at this information. Two important terms to understand, and again research in the schools you are considering, are *need-blind* and *need-aware*. Schools that are need-blind make their admission decision without looking at the financial need of the student and family. Schools that are need-aware do have access to this information during the admissions process. So, what does this mean for you? There are several scenarios:

1. A school is need-blind but does not have the funds to cover your financial need if you are accepted. This means you may be accepted only to discover that you cannot afford to attend the school.
2. A school is need-blind but has the financial means to cover the financial need for all the students accepted. This is great because if you are accepted, you will be offered a financial package that covers your demonstrated need.
3. A school is need-aware and does not have the funds to cover your financial need. In this case, the school may not admit you because they see that you cannot afford to attend their school and they are not in a position to offer you money.
4. A school is need-aware and is able to cover your financial need. Again, this means if you receive an offer, it will be accompanied by the financial aid package that covers your demonstrated need.

It is important to understand that your *expected family contribution (EFC)* will be higher than what you want to pay or think you can afford. Every form (FAFSA, CSS profile, school-specific) has a different formula for determining a family's financial need. Some schools expect families to take out some loans, for example, others do not. These are all things that you can research to answer the question: Can I pay for it?

**Merit aid.** Financial aid is not the only type of funding that colleges and universities offer. Many schools also reward students for academic achievement in the form of merit-based scholarships. These can range greatly, and all have different requirements or minimums. In some cases, the merit aid is very straightforward; for example, a student with an IB score of 35 will receive a scholarship of \$5,000 USD. Other schools take all students' grades and test scores into consideration and then offer merit-based scholarships to the top students in the applicant pool. In other cases, there is a separate application or an additional essay, and it is important to pay attention to these requirements and deadlines. Another potential way to earn merit scholarships is by participating in the school's Honors Program, which again may or may not have a separate application process.

In general, the most competitive schools do not offer merit aid because all their students have excellent academic achievement. Therefore it is a great idea to cast a wider net in your college search and consider universities and colleges that are less selective but are willing to invest in you because of your excellent track record as a student.

**Other cost-reducers.** There are several other ways to reduce to costs, beyond

staying in Colombia, which is also a very reasonable option. Some of these methods include bringing in college-credits to reduce your time at the university, attending community college for the first two years of your undergraduate experience, or choosing a region of the world with lower tuition rates.

Many universities will offer students credit for courses that they have taken prior to beginning their studies, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, for example. If you can enter your first year with enough credits that can be applied to your chosen program, you may be able to graduate a semester earlier, which would result in significant savings. We emphasize that this will depend on your program or major and the number of credits that you can apply to your program. If you are entering a career in engineering, the university might offer you credits for your excellent results on all of your IB exams (Spanish, English, Global Perspectives, Biology, Math, and Theater, but perhaps only the credits from English and Math can apply to engineering. In this case, the credits will not help you to reduce costs, unless of course you are paying for each credit, instead of per semester.

Another potential option for students who are committed to getting their degree in the U.S. or Canada, is community college. Community colleges are generally 2-year higher education institutions. They are not competitive and have much lower costs. They also often have agreements with 4-year colleges and universities that permit students with a qualifying GPA to transfer directly to those other institutions, without an additional application process, allowing a student to graduate with the degree from the 4-year college or university. While this can be a cost-saving option, it is important to understand that the transfer to the 4-year institution is, generally, not a guarantee. Because of this we recommend that if you can enter directly into a 4-year institution, you should.

Finally, location plays an important role in the cost of tuition. Tuition in Europe tends to be lower than tuition in the United States, but again, this all depends on the schools you are interested in, the characteristics of your best-fit schools, and the financial and merit aid that may be available to you, based on your profile and what the schools value in their incoming students. Additionally, the cost of living may be higher in many places in Europe, in addition to the costs of transportation.

**Return on your investment.** To close out this section on financing your education, we bring to your attention the concept of Return on Investment (ROI). Education is an investment in your future. You invest the time, energy, and, of course, money into education because you believe it will result in better opportunities in the future, specifically career

opportunities. When considering how much you can invest financially into your education, it is important to consider your career projection. What are your job prospects? What salary do you anticipate? There is a lot of data about this, and this may help you decide if you can borrow money, for example. Although we already mentioned career support in the section on WILL I FIT IN?, it is worth reiterating that this is another great way to evaluate a school's quality of education or value to you. You want to make sure that after three, four, or five years of studies, you have a job that will provide you with the quality of life that you seek.

## REFINING YOUR SEARCH

### Research your options

Once you have identified what you are looking for in your best-fit university, the real work begins. Below is a list of web pages with college search tools to allow you to begin your search. As you begin to identify schools that interest you, you will need to have a place to register this information. We recommend creating a spreadsheet with columns such as the name of the university, its location, programs of interest, and the other characteristics that you have identified as important to you.

- **Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.** The official website for getting information on schools in Canada. <https://www.univcan.ca/>
- **Big Future.** This is the CollegeBoard's website for all things college. In addition to the college and university search engine, you will find resources on careers, financing your education, and the SAT, among others. <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>
- **College Data.** This website is dedicated to colleges and universities in the United States. <https://www.collegedata.com/>
- **Colleges That Change Lives.** "A non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement and support of a student-centered college search process. We support the goal of every student finding a college that develops a lifelong love of learning and provides the foundation for a successful and fulfilling life beyond college". <https://ctcl.org/>
- **Maia Learning.** Students in grades 9 through 12 will have an account with Maia Learning. One excellent component of Maia Learning is the university and college search engine. <https://www.maialearning.com/v3/>

- **Niche.** Another website for researching colleges and universities in the United States, however, the rankings are based on reviews from students. <https://www.niche.com/>
- **Princeton Review.** Princeton Review's college search engine for colleges and universities in the United States. <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-education?ceid=nav-1-es>
- **QS University Finder.** Another great site to begin your search for colleges and universities around the world. <https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/university-news/new-university-finder-compare-universities-worldwide>
- **The Guardian University Guide.** The top guide for universities and colleges in the United Kingdom. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide>
- **U.S. News and World Report Best Global Universities Search.** While this does not include all the universities and colleges in the world, it has quite an extensive list and valuable information about some of the top ranked universities.

### Organization is Key

Be sure to have a place to store all the information you are researching and collecting. One great option is a simple spreadsheet that has columns with the characteristics and aligned questions that matter to you. This way you will not have to keep looking up information that you forget, it will all be in one place.

### Connecting with colleges and universities

In addition to books and online resources, connecting personally with colleges and universities will allow you to get a better feel for the schools you are considering.

**Study the web page first.** To get even more information on the schools that interest you, it is best to go directly to the school's web page. This is where you will find the most up-to-date information. You can also get contact information for university admission offices and their representatives, who you can write to if you have questions about the school that you cannot find on the websites. When you connect with a college or university, you want to show them that you have done your homework; this could make a positive impression and show the university that you are truly interested in attending their school.

**College fairs.** At this point, you are probably very familiar with college fairs. These are events that allow you to talk with college admissions representatives (reps) from several colleges and universities all at once. There is the digital format and the in-person format.

Depending on the size of the college fair, it may be worth taking some time prior to the event to read about each university or college. It is always a good idea to have questions ready that help you assess how well the school aligns to what you are looking for. Take notes and collect business cards or the email of the rep so that you can follow up with questions or send a thank you, especially to a university that you are very interested in.

In the virtual college fairs, there is often the option to communicate with the rep via chat (written communication) or videoconferencing. Many students avoid the videoconferencing option, but we strongly recommend taking advantage of this option. It is more personal and there is a greater chance of leaving a lasting impression with the college admissions representative.

**Informational interviews.** Another excellent option for getting to know a college or university is through informational interviews, conversations with alumni, current students, even professors. Some schools will connect you with someone. In other schools, you may have to use your personal network to find someone that is willing to share their experience with you. Keep in mind that in these conversations you are learning about the experience of just one person. Be sure to balance these perspectives with more objective information such as the statistics and information available on the school's website.

**Visits to campuses.** The very best way to get a feel for a school is to visit. Even visiting a university that you are not interested in attending can help you better understand what you are and are not looking for. As you narrow down your search, a visit to the schools on your list is highly recommended. When you visit, there is usually an information session and a tour, often led by a current student. Taking your time on the campus, eating a meal, spending the night in the dorm of a friend currently studying there, or conversing with students and teachers can be a great way to help you determine if you can see yourself studying there and if you would be happy at the school.

## **PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION**

Congratulations! You have reached an important milestone! You have done the hard work of researching schools and creating your list of first choices or best-fit options. You are now ready to apply to these schools. Let's get started!

### **Application forms**

When you visit a school's website you will find all the information about the application process and the information you will need to submit in order to be considered by the admissions team. In your research, take note of the application form or forms accepted by the university. Options include directly applying to the university through their own system or portal or using a third-party application service such as the Common App or UCAS that permit you to create an account, upload the required materials, and then apply to multiple schools. The Common App is the most popular with universities and colleges from US, Canada, China, Japan, and many European countries. UCAS is the system used to apply to up to 5 universities in the United Kingdom (4 if you are considering medicine).

### **High school documents**

All universities will require you to submit information about your academic performance at some point in the admissions process, including multiple times throughout your senior year and upon graduation.

**Transcripts, grade averages, and GPAs.** Your transcript is the official record from the school with classes that you have taken and the grades that you have received. It should also show your grade average and/or GPA. Your average may be a simple calculation of adding up the final grades from all the classes that you have taken and dividing by the number of classes. However, some schools assign more credit to certain subjects and so the formula becomes a bit more complex. It is also important to note that some universities will request grades from your last four years of school and others maybe only that last two.

Schools around the world use a variety of grading scales (0 to 100, 1 to 7, etc.) and so the GPA, or grade point average, is an attempt to convert the grades from different systems to a 4.0-scale so that universities can compare all students on the same scale. Nowadays, schools often have creative ways of converting grades from their system to a GPA on a 4.0-scale. For this reason, they create school profiles that the university and college admissions teams use to understand how the average and the GPA are calculated in a particular school. You can find your school profile on the web page of the school or ask your counselor for this information.

While it is the school's responsibility to provide you with your transcript and school profile and to upload it to the application system for the schools you are applying to (or send it directly), it is your responsibility to make sure the school knows what you need and when, and that you follow up with your counselor to confirm that this step has been completed.

**Rankings.** Some schools rank their students based on their averages or GPAs. This means that the student with the highest average or GPA is first in the class and then they are

ordered from there. Colleges and universities will ask for this information if it is available. If it is not, they will ask for information on the grade distribution that allows them to see how the graduating class performed and where the applicant fell in that distribution. Every school is different. This information is also available on the school profile.

**Mid-year report.** Students who apply to schools during the first semester of their senior year, will only be able to submit transcripts with grades from 9th through 11th grade (8th through 10th in the Colombian education system) and so often colleges and universities, even those who have already made an offer of acceptance, will ask for an update in January or February to see your grades from the first trimester or semester of your senior year.

**IB predicted grades.** Universities and colleges recognize that IB courses are challenging and often give greater consideration to students who have taken advantage of this opportunity in their schools because universities know from experience that IB students enter into the university better prepared than their peers who did not participate in the IB Diploma Program. The IB exams, however, are not taken until May of your senior year. For universities, to make an admissions decision they will ask for predicted grades from your IB courses. Your teachers will have training and knowledge of who to calculate this prediction and will be able to provide this information to your counselors who will submit this information to the colleges and universities that you are applying to.

## Tests

Another key component of your application will be the results of standardized tests. It is important to know each university or college's requirements.

**Saber 11.** All students in their last year of high school will take the Saber 11, usually in March (Calendar B) or October (Calendar A). Traditionally, Colombian universities based their admission decisions on the results of this test, however, since the pandemic they have been offering options for students to apply earlier in the second semester using grades and ranking or grade distribution.

**English proficiency.** Many Colombian universities require students to graduate with a certain level of proficiency in a second language. In general, Redcol students will enter the universities having already completed this requirement for English, however, each university will have different requirements for demonstrating this proficiency. Examples include: a U.S. high school diploma (all Redcol students graduate with a U.S. diploma through the Cognia

accreditation), a specific score IB English exam, or a minimum score on the TOEFL or IELTS.

Universities and colleges outside of Colombia will want to make sure international students have proficiency in the language of instruction of their institution, whether it be English, German, or another language different to the student's native language. Again, most universities provide various options for demonstrating this proficiency.

Beginning with the Class of 2023 (Calendar B) and Class of 2022 (Calendar A), all Redcol students will take the TOEFL iBT® as a requirement for graduation and the results from this exam should be accepted in most institutions around the world. If for some reason it is not accepted by a university or college that you would like to apply to, please talk with your counselor to look at other possibilities. The Class of 2023 (Calendar B) and Class of 2022 (Calendar A) will take this exam at the beginning of September 2022. Future classes, however, will take the exam in their junior year or 11th grade.

**SAT (& PSAT).** The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) is an entrance exam that many U.S. colleges and universities use to make admissions decisions. The PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) is another standardized test for younger grades that models the SAT and provides detailed feedback to help students identify their current performance, strengths, and weaknesses, that will help them to better prepare for the SAT. All Redcol students, beginning in 2023 will take the PSAT10 in 10th grade. The SAT will be optional, however, it is highly recommended for students considering applying to schools in the United States. In recent years, many universities have moved to “test-optional”, giving students the option of submitting the results of their SAT or not. Decisions about merit scholarships are often based on the SAT results, so it is important to make this decision carefully with the support of your counselor.

Students who choose to take the SAT should take some time to prepare for the exam. The feedback from the PSAT is an excellent place to start. There are also excellent free resources online. At Redcol, we recommend [this program](#) that Khan Academy created in conjunction with CollegeBoard that allows you to connect your CollegeBoard account (where your PSAT and SAT results are sent) to your Khan Academy account, so that a personalized study program can be developed for you. If you believe you need a private tutor or additional preparation resources, please consult your counselor who can guide you in making the right decision for you.

**International Baccalaureate (IB).** If you are a part of the IB Diploma Program, the universities and colleges that you apply to will want you to submit your final results, once reported. Remember, during your application you will be providing them with your IB

predicted grades and universities will want to confirm how well you actually fared on your exams. Each college and university will use these results differently. As previously mentioned, these results may be used to evidence your completion of the English (or second language) requirement at a university. Additionally, colleges and universities may use these results to offer additional scholarships. Each school is different, so it is important to research this information when identifying the schools to which you plan to apply. Finally, some schools will allow you to transfer in credit for IB courses, which may be of benefit to you if the courses meet some of the requirements for your chosen program or major. Again, this is something to look into during the research phase of this process.

### **Résumé**

Different schools may refer to this by other names such as an activities sheet or the *hoja de vida*, in Spanish. This document is a summary of your most notable accomplishments, your leadership, and your participation in extracurricular activities, sports, and volunteer activities. In general, it is recommended that you limit this document to 1 or 2 pages maximum. This document helps universities and colleges understand more about how you spend your time outside of the classroom and can give them insights into how you might contribute to their community.

### **Personal essays or statements**

Many universities and colleges require personal essays or statements. This is where you can highlight what makes you unique and what matters most to you. Admissions officers will be reading these essays to determine your fit for the school and what you will contribute to the incoming class. This is your best chance at making yourself stand out and turning an admissions officer into an advocate for your acceptance.

**What to write about.** The prompts or questions on which you will write will depend on the university and the application platform that is being used. The Common Application provides a set of questions to choose from for a 650-word essay. Universities, even if they accept applications through the CommApp, may also require additional essays. The sooner you identify the questions you need to answer, the sooner you can begin drafting your responses. Be sure to take advantage of the word limit; use all the space you have but do not go over. Additionally, be sure to carefully proofread your work before submitting - an essay riddled with errors will not be looked upon favorably.

**Don't skip "optional".** Many universities and colleges will include additional essays that are marked "optional". Please ignore this. These essays are NOT optional. If in the admissions process, it comes down to you and one other candidate and only one of you has taken the time to respond to this additional essay, the decision will be much easier for the

admissions team. If you are completing an application for the school, it is because you want to attend, and this means taking advantage of every opportunity to show them why you are a great candidate for their school.

**Proofreaders are not re-writers.** These essays are your chance to shine, to show who you are and how you hope to use your time at college. This is *personal*. While you will find many tips and tricks for developing a clear and interesting personal statement online and in books, at the end of the day only you will be able to decide the content to include. Take it seriously and give it the time it deserves, but also enjoy it. Then when you are ready, have a trusted adult read it over for clarity and grammar errors. This is key. Often parents and teachers will want to make changes to match their style or preferences, be sure to ask them to only provide feedback on errors in spelling and grammar and on areas that might not be clear to the reader so that you can go back and make adjustments. Universities want to hear your voice and often can identify when an adult has interfered too much in the writing process of an applicant.

### **Letters of recommendation**

Another component of the application is the letter of recommendation. Universities and colleges may ask for one or two letters of recommendation from a teacher or coach. Your counselor will also write a letter of recommendation for your application, in many cases. It is important to choose a teacher who knows you well and who can attest to your strengths and how you may make an excellent addition to the incoming class of students at the university to which you are applying. You may also want to select a teacher whose subject aligns to your program of study or major. For example, if you are interested in engineering, it may make sense to ask a math or science teacher to write your recommendation.

**Brag sheet.** The Redcol college counselors will support the teachers at your school with the writing of the recommendation by providing information on the basic structure of this letter, its purpose, and some valuable tips for helping you to stand out among other candidates. Counselors will also insist that teachers not exaggerate in the letters. Teachers should highlight a few of your key strengths or attributes and support this with concrete examples. You can help teachers with this by putting together a brag sheet, or list of accomplishments or characteristics that you believe you demonstrated in the teacher's class. Maybe you were a strong leader in a specific project or activity, maybe you won an important debate, maybe you helped your peers; whatever the examples are, share this with the teacher. He or she will decide if they want to use this information or not, but we promise that in most cases it will be a huge help and will result in a stronger, more personalized letter.

### **Interviews**

At some colleges and universities, the interview is required for all applicants. In other cases, it may be optional and granted at the request of the applicant. Finally, this may be an option used at the discretion of the admissions team. If you have researched the school well and have already attended an information session, spoken with an alum of the school, and/or visited the school, you are probably more than ready for the interview. However, it is always a good idea to think about the information that you want to get across in an interview. There are many resources online that you can use. Your counselor can also conduct a mock interview with you, so that you feel comfortable and prepared.

### **Additional forms**

Every university is unique, so be sure to carefully review the list of materials that each school requests. Additional forms will include financial aid applications and separate applications for merit aid and other scholarships (see CAN I PAY FOR IT?).

### **When to apply: Early decision, early action, and regular decision**

Prior to the pandemic, this process was pretty straightforward in Colombia: take the Saber 11, get your scores, present them to the universities and programs that interest you, and see if you make the cut. Unfortunately, since the pandemic many universities across Colombia have made changes to their admissions process in an attempt to recruit students early and guarantee that they fill all the openings for the incoming class. You, however, will probably be considering some Colombian universities and some foreign universities, so the key here is going to be organization, but there are also some terms and conditions that you will want to understand.

Your first step is to identify the deadlines for applying. Again, these deadlines differ from school to school and when you apply may determine when you need to make your decision and so you may need to be a bit strategic.

**Early decision and early action.** Around 450 universities, primarily in the United States and Canada, offer early decision or early action application options. Early decision and early action deadlines tend to be in November, but this can vary. When you apply early, you may receive the decision from the university as early as December. When you apply early action, the decision is usually communicated in January or early February. CollegeBoard provides a very clear [overview of these two options](#) and their pros and cons, however, we would like to highlight a few important details.

1. Early decision is binding. This means if you are accepted you must attend this school. For this reason, you can only apply to one school Early Decision and you

must make sure you are absolutely sure that this is where you want to attend - even if you do not get financial aid or merit scholarships. For this reason, if you want to compare the offers from several universities before deciding, early decision will not be the route for you.

2. Early action is non-binding. This means you will get the response from the university early but will have until May 1 to make your decision, just as you would with regular decision applications. Generally, universities ask that you only apply to one school using the early application option so that they know that you have a preference for their school.

Your counselor can help you to better understand these options and guide you in making the best decision for your circumstances.

**Rolling admissions.** While most schools that you will be considering will have established deadlines some colleges and universities have rolling admissions. This means that they either accept and review applications as they are received year-round or during a given window. If you are planning to begin your 4-year college experience in August or September following high school graduation, we recommend that you stick to the traditional application dates, applying in January at the latest, because, while you may be granted admission to a school with rolling admissions in April or May, the aid available, both financial and merit-based will be limited or no longer available.

**Deadlines in Colombia.** While Colombian universities do not use these terms, it is important to understand that when you apply to a university in Colombia, you will generally get a response quickly (within a week) and then have a short time period to make a payment to reserve your spot in the university (1 - 4 weeks). This can make things complicated for students applying to universities within Colombia with very different timelines and to students applying to schools within Colombia and abroad. This is why it is important to identify these deadlines and the varying options for applying, and then work with your counselor to develop a strategy.

### **Triple check everything**

This goes without saying, but we are saying it anyway. Double and triple check everything: deadlines, required materials, essays, and more. This process has required a lot of hard work and commitment from you, your family, your counselors, and your teachers and we want to make sure that you have presented the very best version of yourself. Your college counselor will meet with you multiple times throughout this process to support you and check in with you about deadlines, organization, and the quality of all the materials that you are

submitting, but you are the leader of your admissions process. When you click “submit”, we want you to feel confident that you have submitted your very best work and a clear picture of who you are. Once the materials are submitted, the wait begins.

## **MAKING YOUR DECISION**

### **The decision**

After submitting your applications, you will need to wait anywhere from a week to several months until you receive an answer from colleges and universities. This communication will have one of three responses: 1) A letter of acceptance; 2) A letter of rejection; or 3) A letter placing you on a waiting list, putting you into the regular decision pool (if you applied early decision or early action), or requesting you submit additional information or take a test.

**Letter of acceptance.** Congratulations. This is the letter that everyone wants to receive, knowing that one of the universities that you applied to agrees that you would be a great fit for their school. We hope you receive several of these letters and have a decision to make about which offer to accept.

**Letter of rejection.** These letters on the other hand are no fun to receive and may be the first time that you feel that you “failed” at something. Lean on the people who care about you if you are feeling down - family, friends, and your counselor are all people that you can share your disappointment with. Also, remember that not being accepted to a school does not mean you are not still a great student, person, or candidate, it just means that the school had tough decisions to make and chose different students for next year’s incoming class. Also, remember that you carefully selected your best-fit list and that you have other schools that will be sending you their decision. If you followed the advice in this handbook and your counselor supported you accordingly, you should have first-choice schools that do send you an offer of acceptance. Do not lose hope.

**Wait lists or other options.** Another option is getting a letter saying that you have been wait-listed. This is like college admissions limbo. Colleges and universities send acceptance letters to more students than will actually enroll in their school, but the actual number is based on passed enrollment rates and sometimes more students enroll than expected and sometimes less students enroll, leaving vacancies in the incoming class. This is when universities and colleges turn to their waitlist and offer students on the list the chance to attend their university. With waitlists, there is no guarantee that you will ever hear from the university again and there is no way of knowing where exactly you are in the list. Our recommendation is that you should choose from one of the schools that offered you acceptance, and that you not wait to be moved from the waitlist. If you think you should wait

or you really want to attend the school you have been waitlisted at, please talk to your counselor about possible next steps.

### **Your careful review**

Once you have the offers in, take time to review again your research on these schools, what you like most, what doubts you have, if any, and prepare to make your decision. Sometimes it is at this point that students and families pay to visit universities, so that they can compare the two or three schools they are considering. Finances will probably be a factor as well. Perhaps you get acceptance letters from several schools, but one is offering you a 50% merit-based scholarship; this will probably help to sway your decision, especially if you did your research well and only applied to first-choice schools.

### **Your communication**

Be sure to communicate your decision before the deadline. It is equally important to inform the schools that you will not be attending, in the case that there are students on that waitlist that are hoping for that possibility.

### **Show some love**

Once you have made your decision, be sure to let those who have supported you throughout this process know where you will be attending and just how grateful you are for their help. This includes parents, teachers, and your counselor. Handwritten letters are a very nice touch that many teachers cherish for life, because they are a rare treasure.

### **Get ready**

Once you have made and communicated your decision, you can begin planning for this next exciting chapter. If you are leaving the country, this may include visa paperwork, for example. Your university should support you in this process, but your counselor can guide you as well.

Once again congratulations!!! We are proud of you and cannot wait to see the future that you choose for yourself!

## RESOURCES

### Application Systems

Common App

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/common-app>

<https://www.commonapp.org/counselors-and-recommenders>

UCAS

<https://wwwucas.com/>

### Books

Antonoff, S.R. (2019). College match: a blueprint for choosing the best school for you. (14th ed). EDUconsultingMedia. Available from [Amazon](#).

Beaton, J. (2020). Accepted! Secrets to gaining admissions to the world's top universities. Jossey-bass. Available from [Amazon](#).

Belasco, A. & Bergman, D. (2016). The enlightened college applicant: a new approach to the search and admissions process. Rowman & Littlefield. Available from [Amazon](#).

Kravets, M. & Was, I.F. (2021). The K&W guide to colleges for students with learning differences. (15th ed). The Princeton Review. Available from [Amazon](#).

Nitardy, N. (2007). Get paid to play: Every student athlete's guide to over \$1 million in college scholarships. Kaplan Publishing. Available from [Amazon](#).

Sawyer, E. (2016). College essay essentials: a step-by-step guide to writing a successful college admissions essay. Sourcebooks. Available from [Amazon](#).

Selingo, J. (2020). Who gets in and why: A year inside college admissions. Scribner. Available from [Amazon](#).

Spring, S.P., Reider, R., & Morgan, J.V. (2017). Admission Matters: what students and parents need to know about getting into college. (4th ed.) Jossey-Bass. Available from [Amazon](#).

### Online courses and test prep

Coursera. Applying to U.S. Universities. Online. <https://www.coursera.org/learn/study-in-usa>

## PSAT

Kaplan: <https://www.kaptest.com/study/psat/>

CollegeBoard: <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/psat-10/preparing>

## SAT

CollegeBoard: <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat/practice-preparation>

KhanAcademy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/SAT>

## TOEFL

ETS: <https://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/prepare>

EdX: <https://www.edx.org/es/course/toefl-test-preparation-the-insiders-guide>

Coursera: <https://es.coursera.org/specializations/toefl-preparation>

## Financial Aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)

<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile

<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/international-applicants>

## Podcasts

NACAC. College Admissions Decoded.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/college-admissions-decoded/id1469569875>

Ponnusamy, A. (2020). "Episode 08 - Rapid-Fire Myth Destruction". Get Wise: College Admissions Explained.

<https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVkc5zaW1wbGVjYXN0LmNvbS9WdVNxc0Z6aw/episode/NDMwNjE3ZmQtM2FIMC00OTc1LWEzNTEtN2NkMjRiNmFiMmFi>

Yale University. (n.d.). Inside the Yale Admissions Office.

<https://soundcloud.com/search?q=Inside%20the%20Yale%20Admissions>

Iitzkowitz, M. & Van Noy, M. (n.d.) "Ep. 44: Judging Colleges By Their Students' Career Outcomes". The Key with Inside Higher Ed. Edited by Doug Lederman.

[https://www.insidehighered.com/audio/2021/04/14/ep-44-judging-colleges-their-students%E2%80%99-career-outcomes?utm\\_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm\\_campaign=343dc1f64b-podcast\\_2021\\_Judging\\_Colleges\\_04142021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_1fcbc04421-343dc1f64b-226046205&goal=0\\_1fcbc04421-343dc1f64b-226046205&mc\\_cid=343dc1f64b&mc\\_eid=6108f8201c](https://www.insidehighered.com/audio/2021/04/14/ep-44-judging-colleges-their-students%E2%80%99-career-outcomes?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=343dc1f64b-podcast_2021_Judging_Colleges_04142021&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-343dc1f64b-226046205&goal=0_1fcbc04421-343dc1f64b-226046205&mc_cid=343dc1f64b&mc_eid=6108f8201c)

## Videos

Jiang, J. (2015). "What I learned from 100 days of rejection". Ted Talks. Online.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/jia\\_jiang\\_what\\_i\\_learned\\_from\\_100\\_days\\_of\\_rejection?utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/jia_jiang_what_i_learned_from_100_days_of_rejection?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)