

Frequently Asked Questions by Parents about College

1. **What can I do to help my “average” student stand out and get accepted to college?**—The good news is that the admissions application is not all about grades. They look at the overall picture: grades, SAT scores, essay, student resume, and interviews. There will always be a college that recognizes value and potential. Grades are important, but they aren’t the ONLY way to sell yourself.
2. **Should I fill out the FAFSA even though I think we make too much money to qualify for financial aid?**—YES. YES. YES. The FAFSA is what colleges use to determine your EFC (Expected Family Contribution) which is used to determine the financial aid package. This package is NOT just federal aid. It’s composed of grants, scholarships and loans (much of which is merit-aid directly from the colleges themselves). If you don’t fill it out, your teen can’t get ANY of that money.
3. **My teen isn’t motivated to make good grades, how can I motivate him/her to try harder?**—They need to be invested in the process. If they want to go to college, grades are part of the process. Encourage them to talk with current college students (they can do this online) or consider finding them a mentor—someone who can motivate them to do their best. Nagging won’t work. Punishment won’t work. Reward and encouragement from you and others will produce much better results.
4. **Is it really worth spending hours and hours of time looking for scholarships?**—Yes and no. A large portion of scholarships/grants come from the colleges themselves. But, there are also thousands of other scholarships available to college-bound teens. It’s worth registering on some scholarship sites and applying to those that are a good fit. You can also use the College Potential Calculator for some help. Don’t neglect LOCAL scholarships—these are often the easiest to win.
5. **We can’t afford to pay for college, does that mean our teen won’t be able to go?**—There are all kinds of ways to finance a college education: student loans, work-study, college grants and scholarships. Everyone qualifies for parent and student loans. But be wise about your borrowing and consider the best options.
6. **How many colleges do you think my teen should apply to?**—Here’s a good formula: 2 reach colleges (colleges that might be a reach but still attainable), 3 good fit colleges (colleges that are a good match for the student), 2 safety colleges (colleges that the student will be at the top of the applicant pool). Having choices also means the colleges are in competition, which translates into negotiation for you with the financial aid package.
7. **What’s the most important tip you could give me about the college admissions process?**—Find those “perfect fit” colleges. Do the research and evaluate choices based on student body, academic programs, college visits, location and financial aid awards. If the college is a good fit,

they will value the student for his/her contribution to the student body. Those are the colleges you want in your application pool.

8. **My son/daughter has just been wait-listed; what should we do?**—Be proactive. Send a letter to the college and let them know how much you want to attend. If there is more information you can provide that didn't make the application, send that as well. Let them know that, if given the chance, you WILL attend.
9. **My teen's SAT scores aren't that great; will it affect their admissions chances?**—The bottom line is that most colleges do look at those SAT scores. But, it's just part of the overall picture. The best advice I can give is **MAKE CONTACT** with an admissions representative from EVERY college your teen is applying to. This **PERSONAL** contact can and will make a difference when the admissions application is reviewed. Do this by visiting and making an appointment to speak with them. Then hang on to their card and stay in contact until acceptance letters arrive.
10. **My teen is so scatter-brained and we keep missing deadlines—how can I help them get organized?**—Set up a landing zone for college material. Use a desk, a file cabinet, a bulletin board, and a wall calendar to keep track of deadlines. Start this freshman year and remind them that their floor is NOT the landing zone. Once they get used to bringing everything to that one spot, it will be easier to find, file and locate all the college related materials.