

# The College Application Process

***“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”***

~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Okay...so you have a list of schools that you have identified as those to which you will be applying. What's the next step? You need to set aside some time in late August or early September to actually begin the **application** process. This is very different from, and the next step after, the **research** process. Organization is key! How do you begin?

First, you need to identify the application deadlines for each of your schools. We recommend you submit your applications by November 1<sup>st</sup> of your senior year. Why so early?

- You will meet the deadline of 99.9% of the schools in the country.
- You give your counselor and teachers plenty of time to prepare the supporting documents that the colleges require.
- Many programs (majors) at colleges fill up quickly.
- You can take the time to visit colleges you didn't get to visit earlier.
- You can focus on scholarship applications and beginning the financial aid process.

## Types of Admissions

**Early Decision:** Early Decision (ED) is a **binding** agreement between you and the college. Binding means that if you are accepted to the college or university, you have committed to attending that school and must withdraw all applications from other schools. Be sure to ask if getting accepted ED is easier or more difficult than regular admission. An advantage is that you know very early if you are accepted, but a disadvantage may be financial. You are basically telling the school that, if accepted, you will attend and can afford the cost of the school, regardless of the financial aid that they provide. **IMPORTANT: Many schools require the student, parent and counselor sign an Early Decision Agreement Form.**

**Early Action:** This is a way for you to enter the “first pool” of applicants the college will see from your senior class. A number of schools will have an early action deadline and will give an admissions decision within a short timeframe. An example would be Siena College's Fast Forward Application. If you apply by November 15<sup>th</sup>, they will give you an admissions decision within two weeks of receiving your application. This is a **non-binding** application for admission. **Non-binding** means that you are not making a

commitment to attend the school if you get accepted. One advantage is knowing early in your senior year whether or not you have been accepted to the school.

**Regular Decision:** A majority of our students will apply under this heading. This is the deadline you must meet for your application to that school. This could be as early as November 15<sup>th</sup> or as late as February 15<sup>th</sup>, each college having their own deadline. Generally, schools will wait until after their regular decision deadline to send out admissions decisions.

**Rolling Admission:** This is a type of admission where the school has no specific deadline, but simply continues to take applications until they have filled their incoming freshman class. In this situation, the earlier you apply, the earlier you find out and often have a better chance of being accepted.

**Special Circumstances:** Each major may have a different deadline. For example, Springfield College in Massachusetts has a December deadline for Athletic Training and Physical Therapy and a January deadline for Physician Assistant and Occupational Therapy. Their deadline for all other programs is in April.

Bottom Line: It is your responsibility to know when deadlines are and to complete your applications in a timely manner to assure you meet those deadlines!! Use the College Preparation Checklist (\*) to stay organized.

## **Completing Your College Applications**

Now that you have identified the application types and deadlines for the schools you are applying to, it is time to get started on the real deal: The application itself. There are a few different ways to apply to colleges and universities. First, we will discuss online vs. paper applications and the general parts included in most applications. Then we discuss three specific types of applications you may use to apply: School specific applications, the SUNY Application, and the Common Application.

### **Online Applications vs. Paper Applications**

In recent years the popularity of students applying to colleges online has increased tremendously. This is a great way to apply as it can occasionally cut down on application costs and gets the information out to colleges in a timely manner. However, the downside of applying online is that students will often forget to follow up with their counselor and teachers to make sure that all pieces of the application (i.e.