Applying to Highly Selective Colleges
Class of 2021
Why Apply to a Highly Selective College?

- Selective colleges are schools that only admit a small percentage of the students who apply.
- What are your stretch schools? Consider applying to at least one or two.
- Students are exposed to challenging & interesting academic environments.
- Explore new environments.
- Networking opportunities.
- Top programs and research opportunities in the country.
- Students accepted to a Top 20 college or university are designated OCPS Super Scholars.

You won’t know if you can get in unless you try!
U.S. News & World Report Top 20 Universities 2020

- Princeton University
- Harvard University
- Columbia University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Yale University
- Stanford University
- University of Chicago
- University of Pennsylvania
- Northwestern University
- Duke University
- Johns Hopkins University
- California Institute of Technology
- Dartmouth College
- Brown University
- University of Notre Dame
- Vanderbilt University
- Cornell University
- Rice University
- Washington University in St. Louis
- University of California- Los Angeles
U.S. News & World Report Top 20 Liberal Arts Colleges 2020

- Williams College
- Amherst College
- Swarthmore College
- Wellesley College
- Pomona College
- Bowdoin College
- Carleton College
- Claremont McKenna College
- Middlebury College
- Washington & Lee University
- Colby College
- Haverford College
- Smith College
- Grinnell College
- Hamilton College
- Vassar College
- Colgate College
- Davidson College
- United States Naval Academy
- Wesleyan University
Dispelling Myths about Selective College Admissions

1. Myth: Even if I get accepted, there’s no way my family can afford $65,000 a year.

2. Myth: They only admit students with perfect GPAs, ACT/SAT scores, and heaviest load of Advanced Placement (AP).

3. Myth: I must be involved in every school activity, build a school in a third-world country, and complete summer research at a well-known university to be admitted.

-educationquest.org
What are selective colleges looking for in an applicant?

- Rigorous coursework
- Strong GPA (increasing each year)
- College-ready SAT/ACT scores
- Impactful community service
- Involvement in school activities
- Purposeful leadership roles
- Compelling essay
What are selective colleges looking for in an applicant?

**Rigorous Schedule**
- Increase in difficulty each year
- As many AP and/or DE classes that the student can be successful in
- Senior schedule counts!

**Strong GPA**
- Maintained or increased strong grades each year
- Junior year is weighed heaviest
- Senior year grades count, they do rescind offers!
What are selective colleges looking for in an applicant?

Community Service
- Impactful
- Meaningful
- Consistent

School Activities
- Focused
- Consistent
- Leadership
What are selective colleges looking for in an applicant?

**Leadership Roles**
- Make an impact
- Show personal growth
- Activity you are passionate about

**Compelling Essay**
- Tell the story, paint the picture
- Do not just restate application
- It can be the make or break for some students.
- Get second opinions.
- Research school climate.
Application Submission Options

- Early Action- apply by the early deadline, before the regular admissions deadline (non-binding).
- Early Decision- apply by the early deadline and receive early notification. Acceptance is binding (you must attend the college). Can only list one college!
- Regular Admission- apply by the regular admission deadline and receive a later decision.
- Rolling Admission- decisions are made as applications are received. There is not an application deadline. Still apply early.
  - If you qualify for Free/ Reduced lunch, you can often apply to colleges for free.
Application Websites for Highly Selective Colleges

Common App

Coalition

Documents
QuestBridge Scholarship

- The National College Match is a college and scholarship application process that connects students to early admission and full four-year Match Scholarships at top colleges.

- These generous financial aid packages are loan-free with a $0 parental contribution.

- Scholarships are worth over $200,000!
Connects the nation's brightest Seniors from low-income backgrounds with leading institutions of higher education.

The goal is to increase the percentage of talented low-income students attending the nation's best universities.

A holistic approach to reviewing applications is utilized.

Multiple chances at admission.

Finalists can apply to up to 40 top colleges for free!
They do not have absolute criteria or cut-offs for GPA, standardized test scores, income, or other factors.

Generally past finalists had:
- Household incomes lower than 65,000 (for family of four).
- Primarily A's in the most challenging courses available (including Honors, AP, and/or IB level courses.)
- A class rank in the Top 5-10% of the graduating class.
- Standardized test scores for SAT or PSAT > 1310 and/or ACT composite score > 28

Deadline is usually early fall.