



## THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

The college selection process has three main components:

- Preparation
- Research
- Application

There are important factors to consider and to weigh as you are working through this process. The details that you learn as you research and visit each college/university will give you the necessary information to make an informed college choice.

### STEP ONE: Preparation

- Being a competitive college applicant begins at the start of your high school career... everything you have accomplished (courses taken, honors achieved,



grades in coursework, extra curricular activities, community service, leadership roles, employment, etc.) can be considered as part of your college application and resume package.

- At this point, think about the factors that are important to you and make sure you discuss these with your family. For some students, **SIZE** is the most important factor. For some, it is **DISTANCE** from **HOME**. **COST** is usually one of the most important factors to parents.

### STEP TWO: Research



After discussing the factors that are important to you and your family, you are ready to begin the information gathering process.

#### Places to Gather Information

- Use the **internet**.
- Log-on to your **Naviance account**.
- Visit the **College and Career Center** during your lunch or after school to use its many valuable resources.
- Attend the College Representative visitation sessions held at CR North in the fall.
- **Campus Visitations.** We encourage *EVERY* student to make college visitations during the spring of the junior year, the summer and the fall of the senior year.



### Campus Visitations

- The campus visitation is the **MOST** important thing you can do in the college search
- Pay attention to your “gut feelings” when you are on a college campus—most of the time you will get a “feeling” one way or the other about a campus. Pay close attentions to those feelings!

### STEP THREE: Application

Oh, the application process---let’s leave that for later at this time. See our publication dedicated to the College Application Process.

### Factors to Consider in Your College Search

#### **I. Size**

##### A. Physical size of the campus

- Is the campus walkable? Do I need a car? A bike? A bus—is the bus free for students?
- Are freshman permitted cars on campus?
- How much time between classes to walk from one end of campus to the other?

##### B. Size of student body

- How many total students attend? Undergraduate? Graduate? Out-of-state? In-state? Transfers? Commuters?
- Which states (or countries) do most students come from?
- What is the average class size? What is the largest class? Smallest?
- How many freshmen returned for their sophomore year (what is their retention rate?)?
- What percentage of students graduate within four years? Five years?



## II. Location



- City? Suburbs? Small Town? Rural?
- How far away from your home is it?
- How would I get to and from this school? (train, bus, plane, car)
- How is safety on campus, and what kind of security is there?
- What does the surrounding community look like? What is there to do off campus for students? (museums, shopping, restaurants)
- What kind of relationship does the college have with the community?

## III. Majors

- Which are the most popular majors? Any special or "niche" majors/programs?
- For which major/program is the school most known?
- Which majors have special requirements for admission (i.e. audition, portfolio review, etc)?
- How competitive are the students with each other regarding grades?
- Does the school have General Education requirements or liberal arts studies requirements that students must complete regardless of major?
- What kind of academic calendar are they on (semester, trimester, quarter)?
- Do professors teach most classes or are they taught by graduate assistants? What about science labs?
- What is the scheduling system like for freshman...are required classes/electives hard to get into as a freshman?
- Is a faculty advisor assigned to each student? If so, how is that person assigned?
- How do students go about securing an internship? Is there a Career Services Center to help?
- Are there study abroad opportunities available to students? When do students typically study abroad (which year?) and how does this affect student financial aid? Can students who study abroad typically graduate in 4 years?
- What type of academic support services are offered?
- Does the school have articulation agreements with other colleges/universities in the area?



#### IV. Campus Life & Social Life

- What % of students live on campus? What are the housing options (traditional rooms, quads, apartment style, co-ed, single sex)?
- Is housing guaranteed for Freshman? For upperclassman?
- How are roommates selected for incoming Freshman?
- What are the bathrooms/showers like in each residence hall?
- Do all students who live in the residence halls have a university meal plan?
- Do students stay on campus for the weekend or is it a "suitcase school" where students go home on the weekend?
- What % of students are involved in Greek Life? If you choose not to be involved, will there still be other social options?
- What are the athletic programs offered? (NCAA, intramural, club)
- Is there a health center or infirmary on campus? Is this fee included in your tuition dollars? How do students get needed prescriptions?
- What is the Campus Center like? Do they provide entertainment options for students on the weekends?
- How are the physical fitness facilities? Are they open to all students or are NCAA athletes given priority?



#### V. Cost & Financial Aid

- What is total cost of attending? What part is tuition? Room & board? Fees?
  - What do the "fees" cover?
  - What is the required deposit once admitted to secure a place in the class?
  - Are there any payment plans that can be worked out for students in need?
  - What % of students received Financial Aid?
  - How does one apply for Financial Aid at your school?
- Are there scholarship opportunities for students? If so, what are they, and how does one qualify or apply?
- When are financial aid applicants notified of their aid packages?
- Are there campus jobs or work study positions that are available for students? How do students qualify for these jobs? How many hours/week do students typically work?



## VI. The Admissions Process

- What high school courses are required/recommended to be considered for admission?
- Is a world language required? If so, how many years?
- Which College Admissions Assessments are required? (SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, ACT with Writing) What are the average scores on these tests for admitted students?



- What is the average GPA that has been admitted in the past couple of years? (Starting with the class of 2012, Council Rock has a weighted GPA)
- How do community service activities come into play in the admissions process?
- Are letters of recommendation required? How many and from whom (teacher, counselor)?
- What about personal interviews? Are they required, recommended? Would they help the chance of admission?
- How do you use the personal essay portion of the application? What are they looking for from the essay?
- Is there an Early Decision deadline (binding) or an Early Action plan (early but non-binding)?

- What % of students are admitted under an early applicant plan? What type of student would it benefit to apply under an early deadline plan?
- If not accepted under an early applicant plan, does the application automatically roll over into regular decision admissions?
- What are the application deadlines?
- Do all majors/programs have the same admissions standards? Are any majors more competitive/less competitive?
- When will you hear about the admissions decision?
- Is there an "Honors" Program at this school? If so, how does one apply and what are the benefits?
- How/when do students choose their schedule? Is this done at a spring or summer orientation program, or when I get to campus in August? What is the likelihood that Freshman can enroll in their first choice courses?





## VII. Any special criteria that you may have for your ideal college/university

- This could be any number of things, and may be different for everyone...are you interested in a particular club, environmental activity, specific interest area in politics or desire to experience a different part of the country...this is the criteria that you need to think about and decide if there is anything else that your college/university must have for it to be a good "fit" for you!!

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE???

### Internet Research: Naviance

- Utilize computer software—**Naviance** to conduct college searches and manage your search process
- CR North Counseling recommends the use of Naviance as it provides students/families the most accurate admissions information based on Council Rock North college entrance statistics from the last couple years
- This software can be utilized via the CR North Counseling Website, however, you can go directly to the site via <http://connection.naviance.com/crnorth>
- Your user id is the student's email address and the password was created by the student upon registration in 10<sup>th</sup> grade...if you forget your password, there is a link to reset this and it will be emailed to your account
- If you have changed your email address since 10<sup>th</sup> grade-alert your counselor immediately, as they will need to update this information
- Counselors send batch emails through Naviance throughout the college application process—it is **imperative** for us to have the most updated email address on file so you receive the appropriate correspondence
- A list of other useful websites is provided in Appendix A.



### College/University Open House Events

- Most colleges/universities host Open House events during the Spring of your junior year and Fall of the senior year
- These scheduled programs typically consist of an information session led by a college admissions counselor and student led tour of campus—read over the section in this publication regarding the Campus Visitation to ensure that all of your questions are addressed during these visits.
- Many of these programs require pre-registration via website or telephone contact with the Admissions Office.

*\*If you are unable to attend a scheduled Open House event, contact the Admissions Office to set up a visit during a time which is convenient for you...be sure to check in with the Admissions Office to register your visit to campus (these contacts are logged and indicate your level of interest in the college, which could be important later in the admission process).\**

### **College Representative Visits during the Fall of Senior Year**

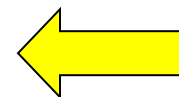
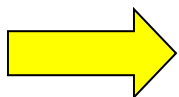
This is another useful tool for you to gain information about colleges/universities that may be of interest to you.



- Over 100 colleges sign up to visit and meet with students at North from September - Thanksgiving (they take place in College/Career Center or Counseling Office)
- This is an excellent way for you to network to make a positive impression on the Admissions Counselor who will most likely be reading your application. Present yourself well (see additional suggestions under "Tips for the Interview" below)
- In the fall you can access the schedule of college visits via your Naviance/Family Connection account (under the "Visits Schedule" link) **OR** check the list on the bulletin board outside the Counseling Office.
- To sign-up for a session, click on the "sign up" link on the right hand side of the page beside the session that you want to attend
- This permission form can be printed from Naviance/Family Connection
- All 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to attend these meetings. This is an excellent way for you to begin gathering information on colleges/universities.

### **Attend the National College Fair**

Attend the NACAC sponsored (National Association of College Admissions Counselors) college fair in the fall at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia.



## The Campus Visit



The campus visit could be one of the most influential pieces to your college search. Each college campus has a different “feel” and most likely you will be more comfortable on some than others (for reasons that can be completely personal to you). When you are walking on the campus and taking in all the surroundings, you’ll be able to assess whether this is a place that you can call “home” for the next four years.

Try not to be disappointed if the campus is not what you thought it would be like—this may be an indication that your dream college may not be for you after all. Rest assured, you will find a college that is a “good fit” for you through your thorough search.

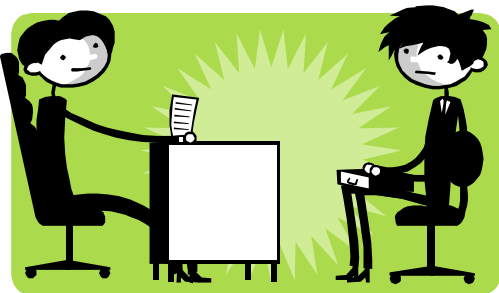
### Tips to Setting up a Successful and Informative Campus Visit

- Call the college/university Office of Admission and explain that you would like to come for a campus visit—they may have pre-set times for visitations or Junior Visitation Days already planned. If not, they will assist you in setting up a visitation date. You should try to call the college at least one week prior to your visit.

- During a Junior Visitation Day, there may not be time for a personal interview—if you would like an interview, make sure you ask for that specifically and see if the college/university can accommodate this request. You may need to come back on another date to complete an interview.
- Some questions to ask when making your appointment are:
  - ✓ With whom will I be meeting during my visit? (i.e. admissions counselor, students, professors)
  - ✓ Where should I report for my visitation? (the location of the start of the tour or the info session is important—make sure you have good directions so you are not late)
  - ✓ Will the visitation program allow for a campus tour? If not, the admissions office may be able to provide a map and you can take a walking tour yourself—make sure to see the residence halls, dining facilities, classroom buildings, athletic/fitness facilities and science lab buildings (if appropriate)
  - ✓ Will I be able to have a meal in a dining hall? (if so, you will be able to observe some of the student body, as well as see what the school has to offer as far as food plans)







✓ If interested, can you meet with a faculty member in the department you are interested in applying to or sit in on a class? (this may be helpful if you know specifically which program you are going to apply to; otherwise it may not be necessary)

✓ Does the college/university offer Overnight Visitation programs? (although this sounds somewhat intimidating, often the student hosts are very helpful and will give high school students the opportunity to see firsthand what life is like on this campus—you'll also get an unbiased viewpoint about the school)

**Don't forget—first impressions are important!**

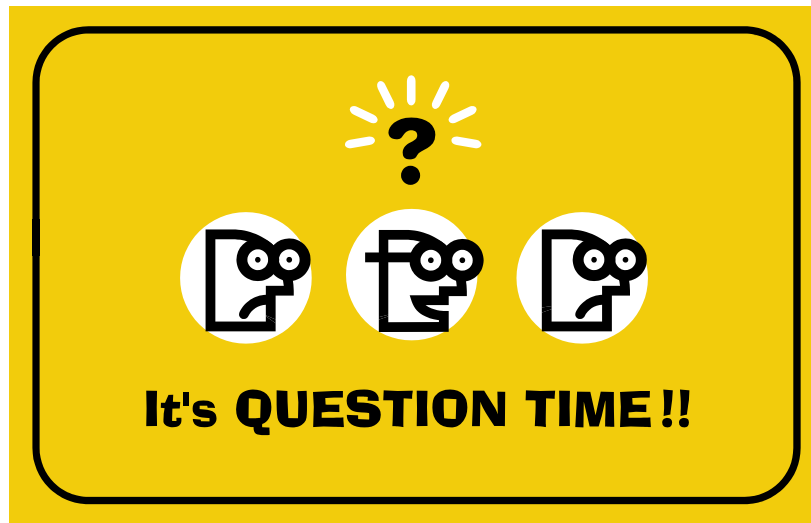
- Dress for success (no jeans/hoodies please—break out those khaki pants, button downs & more mature attire)
- Get a good night's sleep
- Research the colleges prior to your visit so you can ask detailed & informed questions about their programs
- Students should ask questions (don't let your parents do all the inquiry—you are the one going to college—demonstrate to the admissions rep that you are indeed interested in the process)
- Ask to see a dorm, library, dining facility if not on the official tour
- Look interested & attentive on the tour and at the admissions info session
- Write a thank you note to the Admissions Office to express your gratitude for hosting you at their event (this will go a long way if you end up applying to the school and will be added to your file)



**\*\*\*Admissions counselors appreciate mature, confident and attentive students\*\*\***



*\*Try to pick up a campus newspaper—this will give you insight into the issues that are being talked about on campus by the students\**



## THE INTERVIEW

It is often a good idea to ask for an interview while visiting colleges. Most colleges have admissions counselors who are responsible for covering a certain territory of the country. These admissions counselors are the specialist for this area and make it a point to get to know the high schools in their territory. Ask to have an interview with the admissions counselor that covers our territory if possible—this person is most likely going to be the first person to read your application materials if you decide to apply to this school. The interview allows the admissions counselor to put a face & personality to your name on the application.

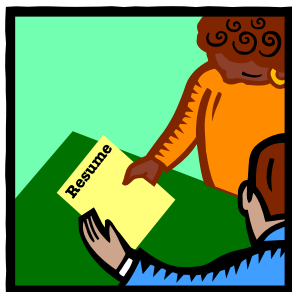
**Here are some interview questions that the admissions counselor may ask you:**

- Why are you interested in our college/university?
- What are your best academic subjects and what do you enjoy about them? What about your biggest challenges?
- Do you have a specific major in mind?
- How did you hear about the college/university and what qualities will you bring to the school?
- How would your friends or parents describe you? (adjectives)
- What books have you read lately? What movies have you seen?
- Tell me a little about yourself.
- What other schools are you considering applying to in the fall?
- Talk about the activities that you have been involved in high school. Have you held any leadership positions?
- Is your high school transcript an accurate picture of your potential? If not, why?
- Is there anything else that you would like me to know about you that would help me evaluate your application materials?

## Tips for the Interview

Relax! (Easier said than done, but please try)—the interviewer is not trying to stress you out or to trick you intentionally—they are interested in finding out more about you.

Prepare for the interview by doing a little bit of research about the school prior to your visit. Go to the website and read about the school and their programs. They will most likely ask you why you are visiting/looking at their school...try to have an answer prepared so you are ready for this question.



Bring an Activities Resume or a list of your activities/clubs including your contact information

Listen to what the interviewer says to you—if you are confused by their question, politely ask for clarification before you answer.

Be honest in your answers—if you are not honest, you will be more nervous and this will come through to the interviewer. Everyone has a weakness (admitting this is not a problem)...especially if you have learned a valuable lesson from a past experience.

Dress appropriately—no need to wear a suit or dress, but no jeans or hoodies please!

Introduce yourself and shake the interviewer's hand firmly and make eye contact—this will make a good first impression. You may not have much practice with this, so practice with your parents (sounds silly, but will be helpful).



Be enthusiastic and confident about your activities, your studies and your talents...you have done some great things during high school—this is your chance to shine.

Don't let your parents introduce you or follow you into the interviewer's office unless specifically invited by the admissions counselor—the interviewer wants to get to know you, not your parents. This will show the interviewer maturity and confidence.

Ask questions about the school—this is usually the last part of the interview. They will ask you if you have any additional questions about the school—here are some suggestions:

- What are the strengths of this school?
- Are there plans for any new programs or buildings?
- What are your recent graduates doing? (grad school, jobs, etc)?

Send a Thank You note when you get home from your visit—ask for the interviewers business card before you leave their office as this will give you their name, title and address so you can send a personal note of thanks for their time and information.

Try to enjoy the interview and learn as much as you can about the school and above all else----BE YOURSELF!

## WHAT DO COLLEGES LOOK FOR IN PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS?

1. A challenging high school curriculum
2. Good grades-these show effort and colleges look for an upward trend
3. Solid SAT/ACT scores
4. Passionate involvement in one or two core activities and leadership in activities- this shows commitment and initiative (can be athletics, clubs, part-time employment, etc)
5. Community service hours that show you making a contribution to your community and giving back
6. Part time and/or summer employment—demonstrates dependability, maturity and ability to interact with others
7. College essay that is thoughtful and shows the admissions counselors a side of the applicant they cannot glean from the high school transcript and SAT scores
8. Letters of recommendation from teachers and/or counselor (if required)
9. Anything additional that may help the admissions counselor get to know the student better and help the student stand out from other applicants



## **Appendix A: Surfing the WEB**

*Please be advised that website/domain names do change! Although we check these sites yearly to assure that they are legitimate, we can not be held responsible for information given by these sites, sites that change ownership/purpose, etc.*

### **INTERESTS/SKILLS SURVEY/CAREER INFORMATION**

- ❖ <https://connection.naviance.com/fc/signin.php?hsid=crnorth>  
Do What You Are: Self Inventory based on the Meyers/Briggs.
- ❖ <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>  
Occupational Outlook Handbook

### **SCHOLARSHIP SITES/FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION**

- ❖ [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) Excellent private scholarship/grant search vehicle... students must create user ID and profile, request scholarship applications electronically
- ❖ [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) Submit the FAFSA via the web—avoids complications with the mail, filling out forms incorrectly, etc.
- ❖ [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) The "ultimate" guide to financial aid resources, links to any and all financial aid sites, easily navigated and sorted into list of financial aid topics.

### **COLLEGE SEARCH TOOLS**

- ❖ <https://connection.naviance.com/fc/signin.php?hsid=crnorth>  
A most comprehensive planning tool available to you and your parents
- ❖ [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) A good, thorough source of general information from one of the college guidebook "giants", good general overview of how to find the college right for you and apply for financial aid
- ❖ [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com) Site to find major, search for college, apply to college, pay for college. Career assessment quiz and SAT/ACT tutor/practice information
- ❖ [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) Best authority on CSS Profile and the SAT

### **COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS**

- ❖ [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) Everything you want to know about the ACT is right here at the official site; special applications services available, on-line registration for tests
- ❖ [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) Register online for the SAT's

### **ATHLETICS**

- ❖ [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org) Provides all the student athlete needs to know about playing sports in college.



*The Council Rock High School North Counselors are committed to assisting students and their families through the college admissions process. We encourage you to contact your counselor with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your individual college search and application. The college application process is lengthy, time consuming and detail oriented. The Counseling staff is here for you every step of the way! Good luck!*

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