

WEST ORANGE HIGH SCHOOL
Senior College Guide

Senior year is an exciting time in your life! However, it can also be one of the busiest times in your life. This *Senior College Guide* will help you to get on track early, take the SAT for the first (or second or third time?), survive the college admissions process, and cross the stage at graduation without even breaking a sweat...Okay, maybe just a little sweat. To start, make sure you do the following:

1. **Plan ahead.** Create a filing system that makes sense to you. Work well **ahead** of deadlines to ensure you stay on top of things.
2. **Know the requirements of the schools to which you apply.** Do you fit their profile? Do they fit yours? Make reasonable choices. Talk to your counselor and your parents about your choices. Visit the campus while college is in session. Could you see the real West Orange High School by visiting here on a Sunday afternoon? (**HINT:** The answer is no.)
3. **Keep communication lines open.** This is where *Naviance* comes in. Below you will find handy "how to" guides to assist you with using *Naviance* to your advantage in communicating with your schools of interest and with your counselor! Make appointments with your counselor and **KEEP THEM!** Ask questions and take good notes. Make sure the lines of communication are open between you and your parents (or guardians). Remember, you will be the one going to college so **you** have to take the initiative (not ma, pa, or grandma!).
4. **Develop a list of colleges** and record which features are available at each college. These desirable traits may include the number of scholarships (academic or need-based), location, college majors, academics, school climate, **TUITION**, diversity, etc. **Rearrange** this list so that the most **desirable** colleges come first. Your list should contain at least 7 to 10 colleges. **Regroup** this selective list by comparing **admissions standards** with your school record and achievements. Now divide your college list into three groups:
 - Reach** - colleges with standards higher than your profile;
 - Match** - colleges with standards similar to your profile; and
 - Safe** - colleges with standards that you feel certain of acceptance based on their admissions standard and your profile.
5. **Be sure that you, your parents (or guardians) AND your school counselor agree with your final selection of colleges.** Your grade point average and rank, your SAT scores, financial situation, and your discussions with your counselor and parents should help you decide which colleges to consider. When you have your final list, be sure that each school is acceptable including your "safe" school(s).
6. **Never apply to any college to which you would not happily go** - Ever heard of Clovis, New Mexico? Well you're not alone! It's important to choose schools where you would happily go, even if it's your "SAFE" college. However, don't discount the colleges that are in "the middle of nowhere" because many of these schools offer more funding to entice students to attend. There are thousands of colleges out there; you should be able to come up with five or six acceptable ones.

7. **Visit the colleges when possible.** The school that looks so perfect in the brochure may feel cold and impersonal when you visit. However, we also understand that a trip to your school may not be possible due to financial limitations. If you can visit the school, speak with faculty, admissions counselors, and students. Be prepared to ask lots of questions. Try to sit in on a freshman class. **If you cannot visit the campus**, contact the admissions office to see if they have a Virtual Open House (online), or a local open house for new students. You may not get the same experience as visiting the school but it's a close second!
8. **It's a competitive process!** The college admissions process has become increasingly more competitive nationally and New Jersey is in the forefront of this trend. Rutgers has more than ten applications for every opening in the class and average SAT scores are higher each year. Spend time considering what makes you a unique candidate.
9. **This is not a call to panic, but a call to plan.** If you have good skills, lots of energy and you are interested in learning, there is definitely a college for you! If you are not afraid of hard work, you will succeed.
10. **NCAA Eligibility Center Application ([Eligibility Center](#)).** Formerly known as the **NCAA Clearinghouse** requires that you send your test scores directly from either SAT ([collegeboard.org](#)) or ACT ([ACTstudent.org](#)). Remember the West Orange High School Guidance Department will send your official transcripts electronically through *Naviance* eDocs. Please follow all instructions **exactly** when you register at the Eligibility Center. Make certain that you use your legal name. Do not use a nickname or shortened version of your name. This will delay the electronic request.

So what does all of this mean? It means work with your school counselor, be realistic and most important start planning today!

College Application Process

Welcome to Common App!

In a time not so long ago, any student applying to college completed their applications with a paper and pen. This evolved into online applications, making the process much easier. However, you were still required to go to the website of each school and type in the same information over and over. Well, those days are OVER! Welcome to Common Application ([www.commonapp.org](#)), a web based program free to new and transfer students applying to college. This program allows you to complete one (1) application for any of the over 450 member colleges. For you, this translates to less time spent retyping your name, address, GPA, etc.! The basic features of Common App include:

- Complete one application for multiple Common App schools.
- Pay application fees
- Complete essays
- Submit the supplemental forms from the universities to which you are applying (additional essay questions, applications for majors, religious or academic endorsements etc).

To use common app do the following:

1. Go to [www.commonapp.org](#)
2. Register for an account by clicking the link under the login box.
3. Complete the initial information page and submit with your email address.
4. Write down your new user name and password in a safe place.

5. Log in and begin completing the common application.

Naviance Family Connection

Family Connection is a Web-based program specifically designed for students and parents. This comprehensive website can assist the student and parents in helping to make decisions about courses, colleges and careers as well as assist in finding funding. Family Connection also provides up-to-date information that is specific to Union High School. Finally, it allows the Counseling Department at Union High to easily share information with students and parents about up-coming meetings, news, events, and other Web resources for college and career information.

Click for Naviance [Step by Step Application Process](#)

Senior Tips for College Essays

..... a word about College Essays

Generally, there are three types of questions: The "you," the "why us," and the "creative." Here are tips and actual sample questions for each type. Don't assume that the questions are currently being used by a college (most colleges adjust questions annually).

The "You" Question

Many colleges ask for an essay that boils down to, "Tell us about yourself." The school just wants to know you better and see how you'll introduce yourself.

For example:

"Please complete a one-page personal statement and submit it with your application." (James Madison University)

"How would you describe yourself as a human being? What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to see flourish and which would you like to see wither?" (Bates College)

Your Approach

This direct question offers a chance to reveal your personality, insight, and commitment. The danger is that it's open-ended, so you need to focus. Find just one or two things that will reveal your best qualities, and avoid the urge to spill everything.

The "Why Us" Question

Some schools ask for an essay about your choice of a school or career. They're looking for information about your goals, and about how serious your commitment is to this particular school.

For example:

"Why is UVM a good college choice for you?" (University of Vermont)

"Please tell us about your career goals and any plans you may have for graduate study." (Westfield State College)

Your Approach

The focus is provided: Why did you choose this school or path? This should be pretty clear to you, since you probably went through some kind of selection process. Make sure you know your subject well. For example, if you say you want to attend Carleton College to major in agriculture, the school will be able to tell how carefully you've chosen (Carleton doesn't have an agriculture major).

The "Creative" Question

Some colleges evaluate you through your choice of some tangential item: a national issue, a famous person, what you would put in a time capsule, a photograph. Here the school is looking at your creativity and the breadth of your knowledge and education.

For example:

"Do you believe there's a generation gap? Describe the differences between your generation and others." (Denison University)

"Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence." (CommonApplication)

Your approach

Again, you have something to react to, a way to show yourself and write about your real views. Just don't forget the importance of writing an informed essay.

For example, don't write about a fantasy lunch with a famous writer and get the titles of her novels wrong. Also, when thinking about how creative to get, use common sense. Being creative to the point of wacky is a risk you may not want to take.

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.