

# Crystal Clear

## COLLEGE PLANNING

### November 2021

Seniors – File Early Decision/  
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college  
applications

Check College Board and ACT  
websites for testing opportunities  
in your area if you still wish to take  
an SAT or ACT exam

### December 2021

Check College Board and ACT  
websites for available test dates  
and sites in your area

Underclassmen — Review PSAT  
report (if available) with advisor  
and map out a plan for test  
preparation

Schedule spring SAT/ACT testing  
dates

Seniors — File any additional  
college applications before  
deadline dates

## Why Are You Applying Here?

With so much competition for admission to selective colleges, students want to do everything right in preparing their applications. They often seek to write what they think admission officers want to read. Not a good plan.

Students often think they need to impress the reader with their accomplishments. Well-meaning parents or friends may tell them that this isn't the time to be modest. But you don't want to come across as bragging. Confidence is appealing; arrogance is off-putting.

Rather than telling a reader about your qualities, it is much more effective to share an anecdote that illustrates those qualities. Give the facts and allow the reader to come to the conclusion that you are a leader or an exceptionally creative person.

While students sometimes try too hard to impress in their main application essay, they can really go overboard in the "Why are you applying to our college?" essay. You see this prompt on a lot of Common Application supplements, and it can be more challenging than the longer essay because it is tough to respond in a way that doesn't come across as insincere and irrelevant.

It may be a shorter piece, but this essay is as important as the long Personal Statement essay. Admission officers at many colleges believe the response to this question tells them how much effort a student has put into getting to know the college and whether she is a serious applicant who is likely to matriculate. A student who has researched a college and knows it's the right place for her is also less likely to

transfer or drop out, and that means a higher retention rate for the school. Some students use this essay as an opportunity to demonstrate "fake" interest in a college, but they usually end up with a generic answer that won't enhance their application. For students who are genuinely interested in a college, the process of answering this question helps them assess whether the college is a good fit and enables them to write a meaningful response.

When responding to the "why our college" prompt, many students tell admission officers what they already know. They are aware that their college has a reputation for educational excellence. They know the low student-teacher ratio and the great internship opportunities. Your response should not sound as if it was lifted from a school's website.

You need to use this essay to show that you and this college are a perfect match, and flattery is not the best way to do that. Instead, think about your interests, strengths and goals, and look for how they mesh with those of the college. If one institution's mission statement talks about the importance of the life of the mind and another stresses its commitment to preparing students for the job market, you get a sense of the different approach each college has to education. You may realize that one institution is a much better fit for you. Taking the time to review course offerings in the catalogue, and reading about professors, research opportunities, and student organizations will help you make sure you are applying to colleges that are truly good matches. Instead of trying too hard to win over admission officers, you will be able to make a compelling case for admission, in a matter-of-fact way that is ultimately much more effective.

## Career Paths for Nursing

### Majors

- Nurse midwife
- Nurse practitioner
- Nurse anesthetist
- Nurse case manager
- Cardiac nurse
- Clinical nurse specialist
- Staff nurse or clinician
- Flight nurse
- Forensic nurse
- Holistic nurse
- Military nurse
- Emergency nurse
- Geriatric nurse
- Travel nurse
- Health educator
- AIDS care nurse
- Nurse administrator/  
Director/CEO
- Nurse Manager/  
Administrator
- Consultant/Entrepreneur
- Nursing informatics specialist
- Pharmaceutical/Medical  
device sales/Marketing representative
- Public health researcher
- Medical editor/writer
- Research nurse
- Nurse educator
- Teacher / Professor

For more information about nursing careers, visit the following websites

[The American Association of Colleges of Nursing \(AACN\) Homepage \(aacnursing.org\)](http://www.aacnursing.org)

[Bureau of Health Professions | Official web site of the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration \(hrsa.gov\)](http://www.hrsa.gov)

## Majoring in Nursing

Nursing is hot! According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 194,500 nursing positions will be created each year over the next decade. Finding a job will not be an issue for Registered Nurses anytime soon.

The duties of a Registered Nurse include treatment of patients, education of both patients and the public about medical conditions, and providing advice and support to the families of patients. Some RNs specialize in the type of care they provide.

There are three major paths to a career as a registered nurse: a bachelor's degree (BSN), an associate's degree (ADN) from a community college, and a diploma from an approved nursing program. Of these paths, the bachelor's degree provides graduates with the largest number of career possibilities as well as the option to earn an advanced degree leading to employment as a nurse practitioner.

Diploma programs do not grant a college degree. Instead, these are strictly vocational programs, generally hospital-based, and involve three years of study and clinical work. ADN programs are offered by junior and community colleges and take between two and three years to complete. Colleges and universities that offer the BSN can prepare their graduates for licensing in about four years. Many RNs will earn their ADN degree and begin their nursing career before returning to school to earn a Bachelor's degree in nursing. All three paths allow graduates to take the national licensing exam, known as the NCLEX-RN. Once licensed, a nurse is eligible for employment as an entry level staff nurse.

RN to BSN programs allow practicing nurses to earn their bachelor's degrees, thus making them eligible for higher level nursing positions. A bachelor's degree would be necessary for administrative and teaching positions, as well as for advanced practice positions such as nurse

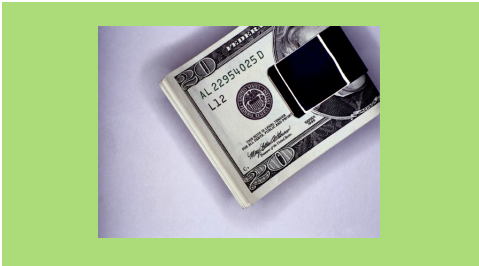
anesthetist, nurse practitioner, nurse midwife, and clinical nurse specialist. The advanced nursing practice specialties also require additional study leading to a master's degree.

Nursing education programs include classroom instruction in such areas as anatomy, physiology, chemistry, nutrition, psychology, microbiology and nursing. Supervised clinical experience is provided in hospital settings and generally involves rotations in pediatrics, surgery, psychiatry and maternity. Shortage of clinical placements along with a lack of qualified nursing instructors has severely limited the number of students who can earn nursing degrees, thus fueling the ongoing scarcity of nurses. Nursing programs have found themselves becoming more and more competitive, with high grades in high school or in the first two years of college becoming a requirement. Experience in a health care setting may also be considered in the application process.

A recent report from the Georgetown Center on Education & the Workforce found that 37% of qualified applicants were not accepted by BSN programs and that 51% of qualified ADN students failed to gain acceptance because of a lack of available spaces. Accomplished high school students who want a BSN degree might want to explore direct-entry nursing programs, such as those offered at Boston College or the University of Pennsylvania. Rather than taking a general college curriculum for the first two years, students begin their pre-nursing classes immediately and generally begin clinical rotations by their second year of college. Other colleges such as Regis University offer their pre-nursing students a guaranteed spot in their nursing school as long as the pre-nursing prerequisites have been completed at a satisfactory level. To become a competitive applicant, choose the most rigorous high school program you can handle.

## Crystal Clear College Planning

# Financial Matters: Merit Awards Make Private Colleges Affordable



While the Ivies and other elite schools put their resources into need-based rather than merit aid, a majority of private colleges, in an effort to attract top students, award substantial scholarships or grants based on merit.

Merit scholarships are especially helpful in attracting students whose families don't qualify for need-based financial aid but are unable or unwilling to pay more than \$50,000 a year for college.

## Social Media—Think Before You Post

Stories abound of students and even teachers sharing inappropriate items on social media. You would think students who are about to apply to colleges and be evaluated by admission officers would know better. The truth is that the vast majority of high school students are very responsible about their social media presence but we only hear about the foolish ones whose mistakes live on as lessons for others.

Applicants often want to know if colleges are fishing in the social media waters. Are colleges and universities proactively seeking out information on prospective applicants or not?

Research from Kaplan Test Prep, who surveyed over 300 admission officers, found that the percentage of admission officers who think it is ok to visit applicants' social media pages to learn more about them has hit a record high of 65%, up significantly from when Kaplan first explored this issue. Further research also showed that only 17% of admission officers do it "often." Googling an applicant to learn more about

At highly selective colleges that offer merit scholarships, students need to have outstanding academic records. They may be required to write additional scholarship essays and may need to interview on campus. Some scholarships also consider leadership and community service.

Other colleges offer guaranteed scholarships, so if you have met a specified grade point average and test score, you will get a scholarship. National Merit Scholarship finalists are guaranteed scholarships at some schools. If you have reasonably good grades and test scores, and are willing to consider colleges that are not as well-known, you are likely to end up with some scholarship offers. Scholarships are generally renewable for three addition-

al years, as long as you maintain the required grade point average.

Students who can afford to attend a private college without taking on huge debt may find that the educational experience is much more personal and engaging, and well worth the extra cost. You are more likely to find a student-centered environment, more meaningful interactions with professors and more access to support services at a smaller private college than at a large public institution.

At private colleges, most students successfully complete their degree requirements in four years. So don't let the sticker price of private colleges keep you from applying; merit scholarships may make them more affordable than you think.

them has remained relatively stable over the past two years, at 36%.

### Why are colleges looking?

It's interesting to note that both positive and negative factors trigger admission officers to look beyond the traditional elements of the application (GPA, standardized test scores, extracurriculars) and turn to students' Facebook or Google accounts.

**Special talents** - Students who are musicians, writers, models or poets will often invite admission officers to view their social media presence in their applications.

**Award verification** - There is no formal "fact-checking" process when students submit their applications. Colleges generally take at face-value whatever honors students list and the time commitments and leadership roles students state in their extracurricular activities and work experiences. However, a mention of a particularly distinguished award will sometimes trigger a search.

**Negative stuff** - Some admission officers say that if an applicant mentions that they have a criminal background or a record of disciplinary action, they will do some online digging to get more details.

**Scholarship applications** - Students applying for special scholarships can come under greater scrutiny, as schools want to ensure those receiving the scholarships are fully deserving; extra due diligence can come in the form of online checking.

The worst reason a student's social media presence may be viewed is referred to as "Admissions Sabotage." The ugly truth is that colleges' admission officers are occasionally anonymously alerted to social media postings by students or parents who are trying to sabotage another student's chance of being accepted. Admission officers will typically follow-up to verify any accusations.



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## What is Holistic Admissions?

Colleges that practice holistic admissions consider factors beyond grades and test scores when making admission decisions. For most colleges, grades earned and courses selected make up the bulk of the admission criteria; selective colleges want to see evidence of high grades in a challenging curriculum. With the majority of US colleges now offering test optional admission (at least for the current year), additional factors take on new importance in holistic admissions. So what else counts?

Holistic admissions looks closely at the ways in which the applicant chooses to spend their time. Evidence of depth of commitment and growth over time in a few extracurricular activities makes the applicant a more competitive candidate. Impact on others, through leadership activities and community service, also plays a significant role. These qualities are seen in the applicant's activity list, resume, essays and recommendations.

Holistic admissions also looks at the institution's priorities in a given year. The college may need more students able to pay

the whole bill, more students from under-represented areas of the country, or more students interested in majoring in the classics or languages. Sometimes, the institutional priorities include more legacy candidates, a flautist for the orchestra, a catcher for the baseball team, or a journalist for the newspaper. Institutional priorities vary from college to college, and change from year to year.

Holistic admissions may also take demonstrated interest (DI) into account. For colleges that do consider DI, have you connected with their admission officers, opened (and perhaps responded) to their emails, visited either virtually or in-person, connected with admission officers when they have visited your area (or on-line), and accepted offers of interviews with either staff or alumni?

While you can't affect many of these factors and institutional priorities, you can still make yourself a competitive candidate for admission by maximizing those you can control including involvement in activities, your academic profile, and demonstrating interest in each college on your list.