

Pre-Event Activities:

Creating a College-Going Culture and Getting Students Prepared

College Application Week Resource Audit

The participation of multiple stakeholders is key to a successful College Application Week. Use this chart to identify which stakeholders best fit your school's needs.

College Research Worksheet

Understanding match, fit, and cost is critical to researching colleges. Have students use this worksheet to help them research and identify the colleges to which they want to apply.

College Application Worksheet ^{2,5}

This worksheet is an opportunity for students to identify some of the most common information asked on college applications prior to the event. Ensure students have this well in advance of the College Application Week event so they can ask any questions they may have before they apply.

Application Fee Waivers

Students who are eligible for fee waivers associated with college entrance exams (SAT or ACT) are also usually eligible for college application fee waivers. It is important to begin talking with students about this payment option early in the school year. This section provides additional details on the fee waiver process and resources to learn more.

"Ask Me!" Signs ⁵

This is a quick and low-cost way to create awareness and excitement for your school's College Application Week event. Send the "Ask Me!" sign to all staff members in the school and ask them to customize and display it outside their classroom or office.

Information Letters ^{2,5}

To assist getting the word out, sample letters are included that can be sent to families and community partners about your school's College Application Week event. These should be sent about two months prior to your College Application Week event on school letterhead.

Phone Blasts

To remind parents that the College Application Week opportunity is available to their child, a sample phone blast is included. To ensure students still have time to prepare for the event, it is recommended that this be implemented at least three weeks prior to the program.

Sample Press Release ^{2,5}

Contact your local media to inform them of your College Application Week event. If school policy allows, invite them to be part of your program. Media coverage will help students, families, and the community recognize the importance of this program for your school and students.

Other Pre-Event Activities ^{2,5,8}

Other ideas for enhancing a college-going culture prior to your College Application Week event are included here.



College Application Week Resource Audit

SCHOOL PARTNERS

Use the table below to identify potential education partners in your school's College Application Week event. Space has been provided at the bottom of the table for you to add additional education partners, if needed.

Potential Partner	Name of Contact	E-mail Address	Phone Number
Admissions Representative from Local College or University			
Local Business Leader			
Local Chamber of Commerce			
Community-Based College Access Initiative			
Faith-Based Community Representative			
Nonprofit Representative			
PTA or Parent Representative			
Student Representative			

College Research Worksheet – Page 1



Prior to submitting a college application, you need to research the various college options you have available. During your research, there are three important things for you to consider: fit, match, and cost. This worksheet will help you think through each of them:

Does the college fit with your preferences? There are several factors to consider with regard to fit such as the size of the school, the location of the school, and services available on campus. Also, it is important to consider the college's graduation rates and retention rates (the number of students who return to school for their second year) when researching what a college has to offer. Finally, does the school offer your major? If you're not sure what you'd like to major in, visit ACT Profile (www.act.org/profile) to explore and learn more about careers and majors that align with your interests and talents.

Does the college match with your academic record? For this, you'll need to understand how your high school grade point average (GPA), your college entrance exam scores (SAT and/or ACT), and the courses you've taken in high school match to the college's entrance requirements AND to the average GPAs and scores of students admitted. Keep in mind that what a school requires could be different from the averages of the students they admit.

You should plan to apply to multiple schools and should include at least one of each of the following types of schools:

- **Reach School** – This does not mean out of reach, it just means that the school may be more selective (look at the percent of applicants admitted) and your academic record may be on the lower end of what the college typically accepts. In other words, you *may* be admitted to this school.
- **Match School** – Typically, at a match school, your academic record will be similar to the "average" student admitted to this school. In other words, you are *likely* to be admitted.
- **Safety School** – A safety school will usually have either open enrollment (meaning anyone who submits a completed application is admitted) or will be considered a "less selective" institution. Your academic record will exceed the institution's requirements and averages for students admitted. In other words, you will almost *definitely* be admitted.

Understand the cost of the institutions to which you would like to apply. Keep in mind that the "sticker" price of a college may be very different from the "net" price of a college after you consider the amount of aid that is typically available to students.

Use the worksheet below to think through what type of college you would like to attend (fit). The worksheet will also ask you to detail your academic record by providing information on the various academic indicators that many colleges consider during the application review process. If you're unsure of any of the information requested, be sure to work with your school counselor so you have the most accurate information possible.

Use the completed tables to help you identify the colleges to which you would like to apply! After the worksheet you will find a table you can complete with information specific to the colleges you are researching. To research colleges, visit the College Board's Big Future website (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>) where you can use the information you identify on the next page to create a profile and find colleges that fit and match your academic background and interests. Or, you can look up information on any college to which you are interested in applying. Remember, you should plan to apply to at least one reach, one match, and one safety college. Big Future also has net price calculators for each institution you are researching. Use this to determine how much it would likely cost you to attend that institution.

College Research Worksheet – Page 2

Identifying Your College Fit

LOCATION

Where would your ideal college be located? Circle one.

In-state Out-of-state Either

How important is location to you? Circle one.

Very Important Important Not Important

TYPE OF SCHOOL

In which kind of setting would your ideal college be? Circle one.

Rural Suburban Urban

How important is setting to you? Circle one.

Very Important Important Not Important

How big would your ideal college be? Circle one.

Large Medium Small

How important is size to you? Circle one.

Very Important Important Not Important

SUPPORT SERVICES

What services would be available on your ideal campus? Circle all that apply.

Tutoring Employment Services
Career Counseling Academic Support Services
Minority Student Services Disability Services

What other things are important to you at your ideal college? Some things to consider are what you want to major in; whether the campus is co-ed or single gender; the diversity of the campus; whether students live on-campus or if a majority of students are commuters; etc. Use the space below to identify any other characteristics your ideal college would have.

Your Academic Record

If you don't know some of this information, check with your school counselor!

My grade point average is: _____

By graduation, how many years of the following classes will you have taken?

My SAT Reading score is: _____

English _____ Science _____

My SAT Math score is: _____

Math _____ Art _____

My SAT Writing score is: _____

Social Studies _____ History _____

My ACT Composite score is: _____

Foreign Language _____ Electives _____

College Research Worksheet – Page 3

Instructions: Go to the College Board’s Big Future website (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>) to search for colleges that “fit” and “match” the information you completed on the previous page. Keep in mind the characteristics that are important to you in regard to fit! Or, search for a specific college to learn more. For each college, complete this table to determine if the college is a good fit and match for you and whether the costs seem reasonable based on your anticipated resources.

Name of College: _____

FIT – Information, by college, can be found under *At a Glance, Majors and Learning Environment, and Campus Life* on Big Future.

Location of College (City, State)		4-Year or 2-Year?	
Size of College		Public or Private?	
Number of Undergraduate Students		Co-ed? Women only? Men only?	
Setting of College		Students Live on Campus or Commute?	
Do they offer my major?	Yes No	Campus Diversity	
Percent of Students Who Return Sophomore Year		Graduation Rate	
What services on campus are important to me?			

How well do you think this college **fits** your preferences? Excellent Fit Good Fit Okay Fit Somewhat of a Fit Does Not Fit

MATCH – Information, by college, can be found under *Applying* on Big Future.

How selective is this college?		Have I taken the required high school courses?	Yes No
Percent of applicants admitted?	%	Percent of students with my SAT score?	%
Percent of students with my GPA?	%	Percent of students with my ACT score?	%

Comparing my academic record to this college, would this be a **Reach, Match, or Safety** college for me? (See definitions above.) _____

COST – Information, by college, can be found under *Paying* on Big Future.

Total Estimated Cost to Attend	\$	Percent of Need Met	%
My Calculated Net Price	\$	Percent of Need Met through Scholarships/Grants	%
Percent of Freshmen with Need Who Received Aid	%	Percent of Need Met through Loans	%

I plan to apply to this college. Circle one: Yes No

If “Yes,” Application Deadline: _____

College Application Worksheet – Page 1



Instructions: Students, complete this College Application Worksheet and bring it with you on the day of your school's College Application Week. You may need to ask your family, school counselor, or another adult you trust to assist you in answering all of the questions. **Be sure to keep this information in a safe place given the personal information included.**

Top Three Colleges and Universities to which You Plan to Submit an Application

Prior to participating in your school's College Application Week, you should do some research on the schools to which you plan to apply. Use the worksheet below to keep track of the information you learn during your research on your top three colleges and universities.

1. Name of College:

- Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? Circle one: Yes No
 - If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response: _____
- Deadline for application: _____
- Cost to apply: _____
- Payment option: _____
- SAT and/or ACT required? _____
- Recommendation letter required? _____
- Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance: _____

2. Name of College:

- Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? Circle one: Yes No
 - If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response: _____
- Deadline for application: _____
- Cost to apply: _____
- Payment option: _____
- SAT and/or ACT required? _____
- Recommendation letter required? _____
- Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance: _____

3. Name of College:

- Is an essay or personal statement required to apply? Circle one: Yes No
 - If so, note the prompt so you can draft a response: _____
- Deadline for application: _____
- Cost to apply: _____
- Payment option: _____
- SAT and/or ACT required? _____
- Recommendation letter required? _____
- Deadline for scholarship or institutional financial assistance: _____

It is strongly recommended that you write your essays and personal statements well in advance of your school's College Application Week. Your English teacher, school counselor, and other trusted adults are good resources to assist you in revising your essays. You should bring a final, proofed, electronic copy of your essays or personal statements on a flash drive to the event. If flash drives are not allowed on your school computers, talk to your school counselor before your school's College Application Week about how you can access these documents while applying.

College Application Worksheet – Page 2

Test Scores

Many applications for college admission will request information related to tests that you have taken. Use the worksheet below to list the scores for tests you have already taken. If you have not yet taken the SAT or ACT and the school(s) you are applying to require them, speak with your school counselor about upcoming test dates. You will need to take at least one of these college entrance exams soon! Most colleges will also require an “official” score that is sent by College Board (SAT scores) or ACT (ACT scores). Talk with your school counselor about how to do this.

SAT

Test #1:

Date Taken: _____

Total Score: _____

Critical Reading Score: _____

Mathematics Score: _____

Writing Score: _____

Test #2:

Date Taken: _____

Total Score: _____

Critical Reading Score: _____

Mathematics Score: _____

Writing Score: _____

ACT

Test #1:

Date Taken: _____

Total Score: _____

Critical Reading Score: _____

Mathematics Score: _____

Science Score: _____

Writing Score: _____

Test #2:

Date Taken: _____

Total Score: _____

Critical Reading Score: _____

Mathematics Score: _____

Science Score: _____

Writing Score: _____

Extra-Curricular Activities

Some applications request information related to the activities that you participate in outside of your high school classes. This could include clubs, organizations, or any other activity that you want to share with the college. List your activities below, including the year(s) you participated and if you held a position or received an award related to the activity.

Activity 1:

Years participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 2:

Years participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

Activity 3:

Years participated:

Leadership position held:

Awards:

College Application Worksheet – Page 3

Personal Information

Many colleges will ask you to provide information related to your residency and citizenship. You may need to provide the following information when completing your application. If you are uncertain about an answer, your parent or guardian may be able to help.

- 1. Social Security Number (SSN):** _____
This is needed to get your FAFSA username and password (FSA ID), which you will register for after you apply to college following your College Application Week. Some colleges may require this on their application.
- 2. Place of Birth**
City: _____
State: _____
Country: _____
- 3. County of Residency:** _____
- 4. Have you ever lived outside of Delaware? Circle one: Yes No**
If yes, how many years have you lived in Delaware?
When did you move to Delaware? (This may be your birthdate.)
You may also need to provide your address(es) for the last five years on the application.
- 5. Citizenship Status** (circle one):
U.S. Citizen Permanent Resident Alien Nonresident Alien Other
- 6. Did your parent(s)/guardian(s) pay state income taxes last year?** Yes No
If "Yes," in which state? _____
- 7. Do you have a parent or guardian currently on active duty in the military?** Yes No
- 8. Employment Information:** List any employment you have held for the last two years, including dates. It would be good to include volunteer information here as well:

Employer: _____ Dates Employed: _____
Employer: _____ Dates Employed: _____
Employer: _____ Dates Employed: _____
Employer: _____ Dates Employed: _____

College Application Information

Many colleges will ask for information regarding your college plans. You may be asked what subject area you intend to major in and for which term you are applying. Be sure to do research prior to your school's College Application Week regarding whether the colleges you are interested in have the major you want to study. If you don't know what you want to study, that's okay! You can work with your school counselor while you're still in high school to do career exploration, and there will also be resources on your college campus to assist with this as well. If you don't know the subject area in which you want to major, you can likely apply with "undecided," but do your research before your College Application Week to make sure that is an option at the schools you are considering. Regardless, you can also change your major once you are enrolled in college.

Intended Program or Major: _____
Term for which you are applying (for most graduating seniors, this will be fall enrollment following your graduation from high school): _____

Application Fee Waivers



Who is eligible?

Typically, fee waivers are available to students for whom the college application fees would create a financial burden or hardship. Students who were eligible for fee waivers to college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT, are usually also eligible for college application fee waivers. During Delaware's College Application Month, all of the Delaware Colleges & Universities have waived their application fees. Check out the Fee Waiver Matrix on the Delaware Goes to College Website to learn how to utilize these waivers.

What fee waivers are available?

There are three types of fee waivers typically accepted by colleges and universities, but it is important to note that not all colleges and universities will accept fee waivers. Students or school counselors should confirm with the admissions office at specific institutions to ensure fee waivers are accepted.

ACT Fee Waiver

ACT provides a fee waiver application in their *ACT User Handbook for Educators* publication, link below. Students who are eligible for a fee waiver to the ACT college entrance exam are also eligible for a college application fee waiver. School counselors need only print out the number of fee waivers needed and sign-off on student eligibility. Students must also sign the form. The fee waiver may be found on pages 23 and 24 here:

www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT-UserHandbook.pdf

College Application Fee Waivers for SAT School Day students:

Schools should have received their blue SAT School Day Score Reporting Fee Waiver cards two weeks prior to the April 2017 administration, which would have been around March, 2017. Students who received and used the fee waivers as juniors should now have their CAFWs in their online accounts. If you did not distribute the SAT School Day Fee Waiver cards last year to eligible students, you can distribute them now to eligible seniors. Please complete the school information on the front of the card. Students must then go on to collegeboard.org/mysat and enter their 12 digit fee waiver code. Once students order score reports with this fee-waiver card, they will qualify to receive four college application fee waivers (CAFWs) directly from the College Board. Using the fee-waiver code to order reports is required in order to receive CAFWs directly from the College Board. If you are unable to locate the SAT School Day Score Reporting Fee Waiver cards please contact Karen Keegan (karen.keegan@doe.k12.de.us)

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) Fee Waiver

This fee waiver can be downloaded from NACAC's website, provided below. Students must complete their portion of the fee waiver request and a school counselor or TRIO representative must verify that a student is eligible to use the form (a list of eligibility requirements are provided on the NACAC website and on the fee waiver request; students must meet only one of the requirements to be eligible). NACAC recommends that students receive no more than four fee waivers for the college application process. Additional information on the NACAC fee waiver can be found on their website here:

<http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx>



Delaware College Application Month is October 19–November 20!

I graduated from

(School Name).

Ask me about it!

(Staff Member's Name)

Sample Student/Family Information Letter



[SCHOOL LOGO]
[SCHOOL ADDRESS]

September 2017

Dear Students and Families,

During the week of [DATES OF YOUR SCHOOL'S COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK/DAYS], we will be conducting our school's College Application Week. During this event, all seniors expected to graduate at the end of this academic year will be encouraged to apply for admission to at least one college or university, if they have not already done so. This event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at [HIGH SCHOOL] as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this event is to familiarize students with the college application process and communicate the importance of applying to college. Information about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will also be made available during the event. There is a College Application Worksheet that we encourage students to complete prior to our College Application Week that is available on www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org. Completing this worksheet and bringing it to College Application Week allows students to more quickly and easily submit their college applications.

We anticipate that students and their families will need to work together in gathering the information listed in the College Application Worksheet. If family members are interested in volunteering during our school's College Application Week, please let me know and I will direct you to the website where they may register. Volunteers can greet and sign-in/sign-out students, assist students with the completion of college applications, and distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

If you have any questions, please call [SITE COORDINATOR NAME, SITE COORDINATOR'S TITLE], at [SITE COORDINATOR PHONE NUMBER]. Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all of Delaware's students to make college part of their future.

Sincerely,
[NAME OF SITE COORDINATOR]
[TITLE]

Sample Community Information Letter



[SCHOOL LOGO] [SCHOOL
ADDRESS]

September 2017

Dear Community Member,

I am pleased to announce that Delaware College Application Month program will be conducted in high schools across the state from October 19–November 20. During this event, all seniors expected to graduate at the end of this academic year will be encouraged to apply for admission to at least one college or university, if they have not already done so. This event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at [HIGH SCHOOL] as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this day is to familiarize students with the college application process and to communicate the importance of applying to college. Information about completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will also be made available during the event.

[HIGH SCHOOL] will be hosting our College Application Week on [EVENT DATE(S)] to assist their students during the application process. We welcome the community to be part of the program. If you are interested in volunteering or guest speaking during our College Application Week, please let me know. Volunteers can greet and sign-in/sign-out students, assist students with the completion of college applications, and distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

If you have any questions, please call [SITE COORDINATOR NAME, SITE COORDINATOR'S TITLE], at [SITE COORDINATOR PHONE NUMBER]. Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all of Delaware's students to make college part of their future.

Sincerely,
[NAME OF SITE COORDINATOR]
[TITLE]

Sample Phone Blast Message



This is a friendly reminder that [HIGH SCHOOL] will be hosting its College Application Week on [EVENT DATE(S)] to encourage all seniors to apply to at least one college if they haven't already done so. Each year thousands of students report applying to college through our program, and we are excited to help your student next! Students should come prepared to apply by completing the College Application Worksheet available at www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org. If you have any questions, please call [SITE COORDINATOR, TITLE], at [PHONE NUMBER]. Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage all [HIGH SCHOOL]'s students to make college part of their future.

Sample Press Release



[SCHOOL LOGO OR LETTERHEAD]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [SITE COORDINATOR]

[POSITION TITLE]

[HIGH SCHOOL]

[SCHOOL ADDRESS]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[CONTACT E-MAIL]

www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org

College Application Week to be held [DATES] at HIGH SCHOOL]

[HIGH SCHOOL] will participate in Delaware College Application Month sponsored by the Delaware Department of Education and the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) during [SCHOOL DATE(S)].

As part of Delaware College Application Month, [HIGH SCHOOL] will work with its seniors on [SCHOOL'S EVENT DATES] to complete and submit at least one college application.

The goal of the program is to increase the number of the state's students applying to colleges early in their senior year. During this event, students may apply to the colleges and universities in which they are interested.

[SITE COORDINATOR], Site Coordinator for [HIGH SCHOOL], expects more than [NUMBER] seniors to participate with the help of volunteers from the school district and Delaware Department of Education, colleges and universities, and the community.

This initiative is part of the American College Application Campaign (ACAC), a national initiative of the American Council on Education. In 2014, ACAC campaigns took place in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information: www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org

Contact: [SITE COORDINATOR]

Phone: [SITE COORDINATOR PHONE NUMBER]

###

Other Pre-Event Activities

There are a variety of other activities your school can implement before your College Application Week to help enhance the college-going culture and spread the word and excitement about the upcoming event.



Incorporate College Application Activities into the Classroom

Ask English teachers if they would be willing to assign a college application essay, personal statement, or a scholarship essay as homework prior to the event. Students should be able to research the prompts on the college applications or scholarship applications to which they are interested in applying.

See if Civics or Social Studies teachers will lead a college match lesson where students research and identify schools that are a good fit to their academic records and goals. Educated citizens are more likely to vote and be engaged in their communities.

Ask Math teachers if they would be willing to do a lesson on calculating financial need and repayment options. A critical component to a student being an informed consumer is having an understanding about the cost of attending college, the financial aid that is available, and what, if any, repayment students will need to do. Investigating average salaries of students who graduate with their major is an important piece of the research.

The Federal Student Aid Office at the U.S. Department of Education has grade-level checklists and research tools to help students become academically and financially prepared for postsecondary education. These checklists and resources can be utilized in classroom preparation activities: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>.

Marquee

Use your school's marquee to inform and remind students, families, staff, and the community about your upcoming College Application Week. Post this information about two weeks prior to your school's event:

"Delaware College Application Month
Class of 2017 Applying to College on [DATE(S)]!"

College T-Shirt/Sweatshirt Day

An easy and fun way to generate some excitement in your school is to host college t-shirt or sweatshirt days. Get everyone involved—students, staff, and administrators! Many schools will host these types of college spirit days on Fridays for a few weeks prior to the school's College Application Week.

Door-Decorating Contest

Taking the "Ask Me!" signs one step farther, staff and administrators can participate in a door-decorating contest focused on their alma maters or what college means to them. Students can vote for a winning door, and the winner can be announced the week prior to your College Application Week. See if a local store is willing to donate a gift card to the winning educator as a prize.

College Wall

Use a bulletin board in the school to celebrate the applications submitted by your seniors. Ask students to write their names and the names of the colleges to which they applied on construction paper and post the paper on the wall. Students who apply prior to your College Application Week can participate and get the wall started.

Other Pre-Event Activities (continued)

Students who apply during your event can join the fun and add their notes after they submit their applications.

Morning Announcements

Generate excitement by highlighting various colleges and universities during morning announcements on the weeks leading up to your event. Students, staff alums, or community alums can do the announcements. Make the announcements exciting by having speakers provide a unique fact about the school, sing the school's spirit song, or other creative approaches.

Guest Speaker

Engage a local community leader or a recent graduate of your high school who is attending college to speak with your senior class about the importance of attending college and applying early. Ask the speaker to encourage your students to take advantage of the College Application Week.

School Website

Use your school's website to communicate the opportunity to participate in your school's College Application Week to students, their families, and the community. In addition to adding College Application Week to your school calendar, be sure to include pre-event activities. Use your website to post any materials that you want students and their families to have access to prior to your event.

Parent/Student Information Nights

Invite students and their families to an information night about your College Application Week. Provide details on why your school is hosting this event, the importance of students applying to college early in their senior year, and the resources that are available for their student to plan and prepare for participation in the program. This is also a great opportunity to encourage family members to participate in your school's event.

The Federal Student Aid office at the U.S. Department of Education has checklists for parents to use to track the steps their students need to take to prepare financially and academically for college: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

Friday Night Lights

Set up an information table at your high school's football games to make students and families aware of your school's upcoming event. Make an information sheet available and a volunteer sign-up sheet for parents or community members who would like to volunteer at your program. During the game, have your College Application Week dates flash on the scoreboard.

Engaging Underclassmen in the Program

The earlier students begin thinking about college, the better. Many schools have started engaging underclassmen in their College Application Week activities to create awareness and excitement for the school's event. This is a great way to ensure students are prepared when it's their time to apply to college! Here are some information sessions and activities you can implement with your underclassmen prior to or during your College Application Week:

- **9th Grade:** Decision-making, learning styles, study habits, high school transcript and academic planning, connection between school and careers, how to qualify for a scholarship, colleges and the degrees offered, and college admission criteria.
- **10th Grade:** Progress check, extracurricular activities, earning college credit during high school, world of work, college costs and ways to pay, college visits (online), PSAT, PLAN, etc.

- **11th Grade:** Money management, finding scholarships, admission process, college entrance tests, preparing to apply, writing personal statements and essays, etc.

Also, use the grade-level checklists available on the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Office website to ensure students understand the steps they need to take to become academically and financially prepared for college: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

During Your College Application Program

Samples of the following materials are included in this manual. Common uses for each are detailed below. The materials have been updated by your State Coordinators to reflect your state's implementation.

Ask Me! Buttons, Badges, and Stickers ²

These are an easy and low-cost way for volunteers and school staff to identify themselves as a resource to students during your College Application Week. If budget allows, create buttons or nametag badges that can be reused for future College Application Week programs. Otherwise, print these out on stickers or labels for the day of your event.

Volunteer Tasks ²

A list of tasks typically delegated to College Application Week volunteers is included.

Volunteer Reference Guide ¹

Your State Coordinators will create your school's Volunteer Reference Guide using information you provide on your registration form. The guide will be e-mailed to volunteers prior to their arrival at your school.

Student Instructions on Day of Event

This handout details the step-by-step process students will need to complete during the day of your event including where to login to apply to college online and a reminder of the handouts available after the event. A critical component to a student completing the college admissions and financial aid application processes is submitting a complete FAFSA. The first step in completing the FAFSA is registering for a FAFSA username and password (FSA ID). We encourage all participating schools to make FSA ID registration a part of their College Application events or shortly thereafter.

College Application Sign-Out Sheet ²

Crucial to your ability to know who participated in the program, where they applied to college, and with whom you will need to follow-up after the initiative, please use a sign-out sheet to keep track of individual student's information. Assign this task to one of your volunteers!

Reminders and Recognition ^{2,5}

A template for reminder cards is provided in this manual. Use these the week of your event to ensure students remember to participate.

Recognition stickers are provided to schools by the Delaware CAM Planning Team. Similar to the "I Voted!" sticker we receive on Election Day, these stickers are a cost-effective way for students to proudly display their accomplishment—they applied to college! Have a volunteer assist you in distributing them to students after they submit their college application(s) and complete the online Student Survey.

"What's Next" Handout ⁵

The "What's Next" handout should be distributed to students **after** they complete their applications during your College Application Week. The handout includes a helpful list of reminders and next steps that students will need to do in order to complete the college application and financial application process.

Ask Me! Buttons, Badges, and Stickers



Ask Me! buttons, badges, or stickers can also be worn by volunteers, teachers, and administrators. If you have access to a button maker, simply use the template below. Otherwise, print Ask Me! on nametag badges that can be reused or on stickers for your event day. Here are some examples of how Ask Me! buttons, badges, labels or stickers can look.

Ask Me!

about
Delaware's College
Application Month

Ask Me!

Where I Graduated
from College

ASK ME!

about
Applying to College

Volunteer Tasks



Volunteers Can Support Your College Application Week

Although familiarity with the college application process is a plus, it is not required for someone to fulfill a useful task and have a meaningful volunteer experience at a participating high school. Here are a few tasks that volunteers could contribute to the initiative at any given high school:

- Post directional signs in the school for the event. Good signage is key to reminding students of the event and getting them to the right place.
- Greet students as they arrive to the computer lab.
- Help students logon to the online applications of their preferred colleges/universities and begin their application(s). In the event students encounter difficulties with an online application, the site coordinator should be prepared with paper applications. In that case, volunteers can hand out paper applications.
- Guide students through the college application process and help answer any questions students may have, regardless of where the student wishes to apply.
- Monitor printers to ensure that any applications that need to be printed remain in order and replenish the paper supply as needed.
- Share personal college experiences with students, as requested.
- Instruct each student to complete an online survey of his or her College Application Week experience.
- Ask students to sign-out, providing information for the requested prompts.
- Hand out materials to students after they complete their college application(s) such as an "I Applied!" sticker and a "What's Next" handout.
- Congratulate each student on applying to college and encourage them to complete their admission file by sending in their high school transcript, test scores, or any other documentation that the college may require.
- Encourage students to share their experience with other classmates.

Sample Volunteer Reference Guide



[HIGH SCHOOL]

Thank you for volunteering your time and enthusiasm for Delaware College Application Month (CAM) at [HIGH SCHOOL]! On [DATE(S)], all graduating seniors will be encouraged to apply to college, if they have not already done so. Delaware CAM is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at [HIGH SCHOOL] as well as our students, their families, and volunteers like you from across the community. We appreciate your commitment to making college a reality for our students. Please use this reference guide to familiarize yourself with the logistical information for [HIGH SCHOOL]'s College Application Week.

Logistical Information for [HIGH SCHOOL]:

[HIGH SCHOOL] Site Coordinator: [NAME, TITLE, E-MAIL AND/OR PHONE NUMBER]

Parking

[Provide information regarding where volunteers can park (usually visitor parking) and where it is located. What should volunteers do if that parking is full?] Upon entering the school, please go to [LOCATION] to check-in.

Volunteer Shift

Please plan to arrive 15-30 minutes prior to the start of your volunteer shift.

Assignment Location

Students will be filling out applications in [LOCATION].

Appropriate Attire

We ask that volunteers please come dressed in [TYPE OF ATTIRE (E.G., PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS DRESS OR COLLEGE T-SHIRT/SWEATSHIRT)] attire.

Breaks

[If needed, when will breaks be given?]

Options for Lunch

[Please let volunteers know if lunch may be purchased at the school cafeteria or provide a listing of local restaurants.]

Contingency Plans

[What should volunteers do if school is delayed or cancelled? Whom should they call?]

Contact Information for Volunteer Questions on Day of Event

For questions on the day of event, please call [NAME] at [PHONE NUMBER].

Directions

[HIGH SCHOOL] is located at [ADDRESS].

Student Instructions on Day of Event

Congratulations! You are taking the first step necessary for going to college—applying! Delaware College Application Month is a program designed to assist you with this process. Be aware, there are several things you will need to do after today to complete the college application process.



The college and financial application process in ten steps!

Step 1: If you are applying online, go to the college application website and find the colleges to which you are prepared to apply. This could be a website with multiple college applications or the specific website of the college(s) to which you are applying. Check with your school counselor or volunteer if you are unsure. If you are not applying to college online, get a hard copy of the admissions application from your school counselor.

Step 2: If you think you qualify for an application fee waiver, talk to your school counselor.

Step 3: Complete the application(s) to the colleges and universities to which you want to apply.

Step 4: Make note of any additional items you need to submit with your application (e.g., essay, transcripts, SAT or ACT scores, recommendation letters, etc.).

Step 5: Print out a copy of your confirmation page if you applied online. If you are applying through a paper application, talk to your school counselor about how to make a copy of your application. Keep the confirmation page or a copy of the application for your records!

Step 6: After you submit your college application, be sure to complete the online Student Survey. Your feedback is extremely important to us.

Step 7: Complete the student sign-out sheet before you leave the computer lab. You will need to list the colleges to which you applied and whether you completed the online Student Survey.

Step 8: Be sure to get the handouts provided by your school after you sign-out!

Step 9: Follow-up! Make sure you submit any additional information the colleges you applied to require. This could include recommendation letters, test scores, and high school transcripts.

Step 10: Remember the next important step in the process is to register for your FAFSA username and password. You will need this to complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form that is available on January 1. Many grants, loans, and scholarships will require that you submit a FAFSA so this is a very important step. To register for your FAFSA username and password (FSA ID), visit <https://fsaid.ed.gov/>. You will need your Social Security Number (SSN), your mailing address, and an email address to complete the process. REMEMBER YOUR FSA ID! Write it down if that will help you remember it, and keep it in a safe place!

Congratulations! You are on your way!

APPLY YOURSELF!



Delaware College Application Month
[HIGH SCHOOL]
[SCHOOL'S EVENT DATE(S)]



Reminder for Seniors

Dates: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

[SITE COORDINATOR NAME, TITLE]
[SITE COORDINATOR PHONE NUMBER]

“What’s Next” Handout



I’ve Applied...What’s Next?

Congratulations! You have taken the very important first step to going to college—you’ve applied! Here are some tips and reminders of tasks that you need to complete over the next several months. If you have questions, contact your school counselor.

Paying Your Application Fee

When you submit your application, you may be required to pay an application fee. If so, you can pay your application fee the following ways:

1. Pay via credit or debit card online. Some colleges require a credit card to apply online. If you chose this option, you will need the following information: credit card type (Visa, MasterCard, etc.), credit card number, security code, name on credit card, date credit card was issued, or expiration date.
2. Submit your application online and pay via check in the mail. You will likely need to include a copy of your confirmation page with your check.
3. Choose the fee waiver option on most applications if you qualify. Check with your school counselor about this option. You will likely need to include a copy of your Confirmation Page with the fee waiver. **DO NOT CHOOSE FEE WAIVER OPTION IF YOU DO NOT QUALIFY.** Ask your school counselor for more information.
4. You can save your application, print, and mail it in with your payment or fee waiver.

Follow-Up with Transcripts, Test Scores, Recommendation Letters, and Essays

Many admission offices require students to submit additional information to complete the application process. It is important to find out what other information is required and send it to the campus as soon as possible! The more quickly you submit all the necessary forms, the sooner you will receive a response from the college’s admission office.

Don’t Forget Your Confirmation Page

If you applied online, do not leave the computer lab without a hardcopy printout of your confirmation page! Also, some schools require this page to be signed and mailed to the admission office to complete the application process. Whether the college requires this form or not, you still need a printed copy for your records. Either way, make sure you put this confirmation page in a safe place. If you are applying by hard copy, be sure to make a copy of your application for your records.

Schools Should Contact You!

Once you have submitted your online application, campuses should be in touch with you via e-mail or letter to inform you of the status of your application. Make sure to check your e-mail! If the school has not contacted you within two weeks of your submission, get in touch with the college or university’s admission office to inquire about your application status.

Learn More about Paying for College!

- The U.S. Department of Education has resources to help you understand the types of financial aid, whether you qualify for aid, and how to apply for aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>.
- Speak with your family and school counselor about your financial aid options.
- Complete and submit the FAFSA as early as possible. The sooner you submit the form, the better chance you have of getting an affordable financial aid package.
- If you haven’t signed up for your FAFSA username and password (FSA ID), do so now at <https://fsaid.ed.gov/>
- Search for scholarships on Big Future or the Delaware Goes to College Website.

After Your College Application Week Program

It is important to ensure that students complete their college applications by submitting the other required materials institutions may require such as high school transcripts, college entrance exam scores, recommendation letters, etc. In addition, students should be encouraged to submit additional applications after the event if they did not have time to complete as many as they wanted to during the event.

Other post-event activities are included below. Samples of the following materials are included in this manual. The materials have been updated to reflect your state's implementation.

Volunteer Thank-You Letters ⁵

It is important to recognize the time, energy, and effort that volunteers contributed to your school's College Application Week. A template thank-you letter has been provided. Feel free to print this on school letterhead and mail. Or, if you would like to send by e-mail, that is a great way to show your appreciation as well.

Post-Event Press Release ²

You notified your community that the event was coming up; now make sure you communicate about the success of your program! Use this template to update your local media about the impact of your program.

Understanding Financial Aid Award Letters ⁷

Provide this handout to students or host information sessions as financial aid award letters begin to arrive. These guidelines to understanding financial aid award letters are pulled directly from the Federal Student Aid Office at the U.S. Department of Education (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>).

College Signing Day ⁶

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan encourages all high schools to host a College Signing Day. Intended to recognize the important academic achievements of students and their decision regarding where they will enroll in college, College Signing Days celebrate this important milestone. Use these suggestions and watch a video of one high school's approach to help plan and host your own College Signing Day!

Other Follow-Up

As noted on the timeline and checklist included in this manual, it is important that your school team meet after the College Application Week to discuss what worked and identify areas for improvement. This time can also be used to share the results of your program. Use the student sign-out sheet to understand the number of students who applied to college and the number of applications that were submitted. During this debrief meeting, the school team should identify a plan to follow-up with participating students to ensure they complete the application process (by submitting transcripts, test scores, etc.) and that they submit a completed FAFSA.

Sample Volunteer Thank-You Letter



[SCHOOL LOGO]
[SCHOOL ADDRESS]
[DATE]

Dear [VOLUNTEER NAME],

On behalf of [HIGH SCHOOL] and our students, I would like to personally thank you for volunteering your time during our College Application Week. This event could not have been a success without your help and the help of many others who volunteered their time. To improve our future Delaware College Application Week events and your volunteer experience, please complete this short online survey at your convenience: [SURVEY LINK].

During our College Application Week, [NUMBER] seniors submitted [NUMBER] college applications. Thanks to our seniors' hard work and the assistance of volunteers like you, they are one step closer to actualizing their dreams of attending college!

Once again, [HIGH SCHOOL] thanks you for your efforts and contribution of time at our College Application Week! We look forward to seeing you throughout the school year and especially at our event next year.

Thank you!

[SITE COORDINATOR OR PRINCIPAL NAME]
[SITE COORDINATOR OR PRINCIPAL TITLE]

Sample Post-Event Press Release



[SCHOOL LOGO OR LETTERHEAD]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [SITE COORDINATOR]

[POSITION TITLE]

[SCHOOL NAME]

[SCHOOL ADDRESS]

[PHONE NUMBER]

[CONTACT E-MAIL]

www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org

[HIGH SCHOOL] Seniors Apply to College during Delaware College Application Month

[HIGH SCHOOL] seniors received hands-on assistance applying to college during the school's College Application Week event held on [EVENT DATE(S)]. [NUMBER] students participated in the event, which was held in the school's [LOCATION].

[INSERT OTHER DETAILS SPECIFIC TO YOUR EVENT SUCH AS NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS ON HAND, HOW STUDENTS WERE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE, OR DETAILS ON ANY OF THE PRE-EVENT ACTIVITIES YOU CONDUCTED.]

[INSERT QUOTES FROM STUDENTS, PARENTS, VOLUNTEERS, SITE COORDINATOR, OR OTHERS.]

Additional information about the Delaware College Application Month program can be found online at www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org. For more information about [HIGH SCHOOL]'s event, please contact [SITE COORDINATOR] at [PHONE NUMBER] or by e-mail at [E-MAIL ADDRESS].

For more information: www.DelawareGoesToCollege.org

Contact: [SITE COORDINATOR]

Phone: [PHONE NUMBER]

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Understanding Financial Aid Award Letters



The Financial Aid Office at a college or university is responsible for sending information letters regarding financial aid. It is important that you read your award letters carefully to understand the type of aid being offered and how you should indicate your acceptance of the aid. The Financial Student Aid (FSA) Office of the U.S. Department of Education provides the information below. For additional information on the various types of aid, definitions of common language found in financial aid award letters, a budget calculator to help you estimate the amount of aid you need, and other helpful information regarding paying for college, please visit the website at: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>.

Be sure to read your letter carefully.

When you receive a reward letter, there may be a variety of aid options available. The general rule is: accept free money first (scholarships and grants), then earned money (work-study), and then borrowed money (federal student loans). The following outlines the order in which to accept specific types of aid and some important points to keep in mind.

Types of Financial Aid

1. **Scholarships and Grants:** The first type of aid to accept is aid that you do not need to pay back. Make sure you understand the conditions you must meet. For instance, you might have to maintain a certain grade-point average to continue receiving a scholarship or whether a grant turns into a loan if you don't follow specific requirements.
2. **Work-Study:** The second type of aid to accept is aid that you earn. You won't have to pay the money back, but you will have to work for it. You should consider that your employment would mean less time for studying. However, research has shown that students who work part-time jobs manage their time better than those who do not!
3. **Federal Student Loans:** You'll have to repay the money with interest. Subsidized loans do not start accruing (accumulating) interest until you leave school, so accept a subsidized loan before an unsubsidized loan.
4. **Loans from Your State Government or Your College:** You'll have to repay the money with interest, and the terms of the loan might not be as good as those of a federal student loan. Be sure to read the fine print before you borrow.
5. **Private Loans:** You'll have to repay the money with interest, and the terms and conditions of the loan almost certainly will not be as good as those of a federal student loan.

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/next-steps#how-do-i-decide-what-aid-to-accept>

Always accept the loan with the most favorable terms and conditions.

If you have any questions or don't understand what types of loans are in your award letter, contact the Financial Aid Office at the college. Always ask questions and be an informed borrower. Make sure you understand what you're receiving and the repayment terms.

You should only borrow what you need. If your living expenses are not going to be as high as the amount estimated in the award letter, you can turn down the loan or request a lower loan amount. In the award letter, the college will tell you how to do this. Use the budget calculator available on FSA's website to get an idea of your college expenses.

Pay close attention to deadlines! To tell the college what aid you are accepting, read and follow the directions on your award letter.

If you have questions about your award letter(s), talk with your school counselor, call your college's Financial Aid Office, or visit FSA's website (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>).

College Signing Day



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is encouraging all high schools to host College Signing Days, “a simple and inexpensive way to celebrate our students, their accomplishments, and their futures.” Similar to athletic signing days, during which high school seniors sign a letter-of-intent regarding the college they plan to attend, College Signing Days are an opportunity to recognize the important academic accomplishments of your graduating senior class.

Here are some suggestions for hosting your own College Signing Day to celebrate the important milestone of your students deciding where they will attend college in the fall. Pick one approach, create your own, or incorporate all of them into your celebration! The key to a College Signing Day is to have fun and celebrate!

- 1. Host a College Signing Day pep rally or student assembly.** Ask each senior come to the microphone and announce the college they plan to attend. Invite parents/guardians and high school underclassmen to attend the event to cheer each student’s decision. Invite a speaker such as a college admissions representative, community member, high school principal, or superintendent to open the event.
- 2. Create a College Signing Day bulletin board.** Have students post their names and the colleges they are going to attend on a bulletin board. Let your creativity flow! Some ideas include creating a tree with branches and posting student announcements on the leaves; putting a map of the country on the bulletin board and posting student announcements on the cities/towns they are attending college; or using graduation cap cut-outs to post announcements.
- 3. Print students’ college enrollment plans in the school or local newspaper.** Print college enrollment plans in your school or local newspaper. Some local newspapers may be willing to “donate” the page, so be sure to ask!
- 4. Have a College Signing T-Shirt Day.** On your College Signing Day event, ask students to wear a t-shirt of the school they will attend. Or, they can dress up in their college’s colors. Encourage school staff to wear the t-shirts or colors of their alma maters, too!
- 5. Hand out nails with ribbons.** Encourage students and families to hang the nail on the wall where their college diploma will eventually be displayed.

Most colleges require that students sign enrollment commitment letters by May 1. So, hosting your College Signing Day in May would be ideal.

For more information on Secretary Duncan’s call to host College Signing Days, please visit the U.S. Department of Education’s blog entry regarding these events:

<https://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/02/the-case-for-college-signing-days/>

The blog includes a link to a video of Houston’s YES College Prep’s College Signing Day event which you can also find here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yp3DMAHh9s>

References

- ¹ Delaware College Application Month
University of Delaware
<http://www.ipa.udel.edu/cam/>
- ² Georgia Apply to College Materials
University System of Georgia
<http://www.usg.edu/apply-to-college/>
- ³ Go On, Idaho! Statewide FAFSA Day
<http://financialaid.boisestate.edu/timely-tips-archive/goonidahostatewidefafsaday/>
- ⁴ Kentucky College Application Week Materials
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
www.kheaa.com/website/kycaw/home
- ⁵ North Carolina College Application Week
College Foundation of North Carolina
www.cfnc.org/caw
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Education
Homeroom – The Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Education
The Case for College Signing Days
<https://www.ed.gov/blog/2014/02/the-case-for-college-signing-days/>
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Education
Federal Student Aid Office
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/>
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/fafsa/next-steps#how-do-i-decide-what-aid-to-accept>
- ⁸ West Virginia College Application and Exploration Week
College Foundation of West Virginia
www.cfwwconnect.com/caew.html

Every effort has been made to reference the original source of materials presented in this manual. If you believe there is an incorrect reference or a missing reference, please notify the American College Application Campaign team at acac@acenet.edu.