



# How to Find the Right College

Saint Louis School

College Counseling Office

*"Thinking outside the Box!"*

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How to Choose the "Right" College

Choosing colleges to which to apply is a very important part of the college application process and should be done with careful thought. You need to examine your own values and decide where you want to spend the next four to five years of your life. By the end of your junior year, you should have formed an idea of the kind of college, which suits you best.

### **Important Considerations When Choosing Colleges:**

- **Parents:** should be partners in the process. What do your parents want you to do? How far do they want you to be away from home? What can their finances afford?
- **Size of the School:** At larger schools, you will find more teaching done by graduate assistants, larger class sizes, but more variety in programs, majors, and social activities. At smaller schools, you will have more personalized attention from professors, a closer community, and smaller classes, labs, etc.
- **Location of School:** Geographical area. Do you want a school close to home (within driving distance) on a neighbor island or one that is on the mainland?
- **Environment of the School:** Urban, suburban, or rural? Do you want the campus in a large city, near a city or a self-contained campus in a country setting? Examine the weather/climate at the school?
- **Life Style of the College:** Do most students live on or near campus, or do most commute (has an effect on one's social life)? Are the students conservative or liberal? Is it a sorority/fraternity-oriented school? Are the students "preppie?" Is it an athletically oriented school? Research what the geographical and ethnic distribution is on the campus.
- **Academic Reputation and Majors:** Does the school offer the major you are considering and what is the academic reputation of that major? Do you want a school with a strong liberal arts program, an arts program, or a science program? What is the graduation reputation of the school?
- **Academic Environment:** Do you want a school that is academically competitive (Ivy League, i.e., Stanford, Harvard, etc.) or comparatively rigorous (i.e., a State University, etc.)?
- **Requirements:** Are you academically eligible to attend the school? *Cumulative GPA, test scores and rank in class are important.*

### **Other Factors to Consider:**

- **Do you want and need a four-year college or a two-year college?**
- **Will you be attending a pre-professional school – (pharmacy, etc.)**
- **Do you want a coed school or a single-gender school?**
- **How are the dorms? How is the food? How is the social life?**

### **How to Learn More about Colleges:**

- **Visit the College:** Stay overnight if you can. Take a tour. Talk to students, Attend classes. Check out the social scene. Ask for an interview with an admissions officer.

- **College Meetings:** Meet with college representatives **when they visit** Saint Louis School. Ask these representatives questions.
- **College Fairs:** Attend **local college fairs**. Get materials from different colleges. Ask questions and introduce yourself to the college reps.
- **Research Colleges:** Obtain catalogues and materials from different colleges. View videos about colleges. Research colleges and universities on-line by using <http://www.collegeview.com> or [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) one can find scholarship and financial aid sources on these sites as well. Many items may be found in your school's college information center or the school library (College/University Section-Bertram Hall).
- **Finally, select a variety of colleges to which to apply:** If possible apply to at least one rigorous college (UH/UC), a state affiliated university; one highly selective independent college, and an independent college where you feel you will be admitted.

### **College Planning Calendar:**

#### ***Eighth Grade***

- **Tell your parents and counselor:**
  - That you plan to attend a four-year college or university
  - If you are not taking Algebra or a foreign language, be sure your ninth grade schedule includes these subjects
  - Strive to make A's and B's in **all** your subjects and do at least one to two hours of homework or reviews every night
  - Ask your counselor about academic enrichment programs in your school or at a local college (e.g. MESA or Upward Bound, AVID, etc.)
  - Parents should inquire about various **Credit/Banking plans** that set aside monies in savings accounts for college tuition.

## *Freshman/Sophomore Year*

- **ACADEMICS:**
  - Develop strong study skills
  - Identify and utilize academic support resources
  - Try to achieve the highest GPA while taking the most challenging class load possible.
  - If you want to attend a selective four-year college or university, you need to schedule college preparatory courses and honors classes that include algebra and geometry and a foreign language.
  - Look at the possibility of taking an AP class or two if they are available
- **ACTIVITIES:**
  - Get involved with sports, clubs, school events
  - Begin community service hours.
  - Form a study group with friends who also plan to go to college
  - Create a personal resume file that includes items such as:
    - Copies of report cards
    - Academic diplomas and certificates presented to you
    - A list of awards and honors you receive
    - A list of school and community activities you join
    - A list of offices you hold in these organizations and
    - A list of community service work and jobs you hold (volunteer and paid)
  - Update your file each semester
- **CAREERS:**
  - Explore college options
  - Read about different career opportunities in your library
- **COLLEGES:**
  - Explore college options
  - Visit college campuses during the summer, if possible and speak to people about their college experiences
- **TESTS:**
  - Freshmen—the counseling office gives the PSAT test to analyze academic strengths and weaknesses. Take these tests seriously.
  - Sophomores—the counseling office administers PSAT exam to obtain predictors of ACT and SAT scores along with career assessments.
- **SUMMER:**
  - Register for summer classes at a high school or community college to improve an academic area where there is a deficiency, or for enrichment.
  - College credit may be earned and applied to different universities

## ***JUNIOR YEAR***

### □ **ACADEMICS:**

- Develop **strong study skills**
- Identify and utilize academic support resources
- It is **especially important** in your junior year to maintain A's and B's and you should be doing a minimum of two hours of homework each night.
- Try to maintain the highest GPA possible while taking a more challenging class load. Colleges and Universities are interested in examining how rigorous was your academic schedule. If possible, take AP courses that are recommended in your expected field of interest. The more rigorous your program the better.

### □ **COLLEGE/CAREERS**

- Enroll in the College/Career/SAT prep classes that are offered
- **Attend on-campus college/university recruiting visits; obtain pass notices in counseling office. Sign up in the College Visit Notebook.**
- Attend **college nights and college fairs**—especially as a junior.
- Begin researching for scholarship opportunities.
- Saint Louis School library and the public libraries have computers to help you search for college and university information. All college counseling offices have college catalogues, guidebooks and directories for researching college options.
- Visit college campuses during vacation periods if possible; if not, take a virtual tour of a campus via your computer.
- Assemble a college application portfolio of your favorite colleges and universities according to priority, costs and preferences.
- Read the college mail you receive and return reply cards for view books, catalogues, and applications.
- Try to visit your “short list” colleges.

### □ **TESTS:**

- The counseling department administers the PSAT to get a preview of the SAT test scores and a chance for students to identify strengths and weaknesses. The **PSAT** is also the **National Merit Scholarship Qualifying exam**. Take this exam seriously.
- If you are taking Advanced Placement subjects, register for the AP exams in spring. Scoring well on these exams will earn you credit for colleges.
- Sign up for an **SAT prep class** with an outside agency or purchase an SAT practice and review book. The SAT/ACT format should include a written segment.
- Take the SAT/ACT exam (recommended to take the March, May or June exam.)
- For those who plan to attend UH or want to attend a University of California, the SAT (Reasoning Tests) should be taken in March, May or June or during the senior year. If you intend to

attend a university that requires SAT II (Subject tests)—check with your counselor or [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) to obtain information on college/university site for this information.

□ **ACTIVITIES:**

- Get involved with sports, clubs, school events
- Finish community service hours
- Athletes register with the NCAA Clearinghouse Initial Eligibility by logging on to [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) or checking with the counseling office secretary for assistance.

□ **SUMMER:**

- Register for classes at high schools or community colleges to either improve an academic area where there is a deficiency or for enrichment.
- College credit may be earned and applied to different universities
- Begin a rough draft of your college essay for UH/UC or for a private university.

### ***SENIOR YEAR***

□ **AUGUST:**

- Take challenging courses and note progress towards graduation and college requirements
- Apply for a social security card if you do not possess one.

□ **SEPTEMBER:**

- **Attend College/University visits to your campus. Ask questions about your field of interests. Market yourself to the college representatives.**
- Maintain or improve activities, academics, study skills
- Research scholarship opportunities
- Register for SAT I, SAT II or ACT **as needed on-line**
- Finalize your 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices for college.

□ **OCTOBER:**

- Obtain college applications **on-line** or download hard copies
- Work on your **resume** with your college counselor and keep a copy on file with the college counseling office.
- Ask for necessary letters of recommendation—give copies of completed portfolio and resume to teachers that you request letters from
- Inquire about applying for COP, the College Opportunity Program if you feel that you do not have the grade requisites to be accepted conditionally into the University of Hawaii.
- Attend college nights sponsored in your area
- Finalize your college essay—check with your college counselor or English teacher

□ **NOVEMBER:**

- Obtain letters of recommendations by November 15<sup>th</sup>
- Mail admissions applications early to universities and colleges if possible but before their deadlines. Some colleges have rolling admissions.

- Have your transcripts sent to requesting colleges and universities. The transcript forms are located in the Counseling Center. Ask Mrs. Nakakura for assistance.
- **DECEMBER:**
  - Last month to take ACT or SAT for UC System for universities requiring the SAT II subject tests.
  - Attend meetings on financial aid process (FAFSA) scheduled during the latter part of November for you and your parents.
  - Review FAFSA forms
  - Visit college campuses during vacation
- **JANUARY:**
  - File FAFSA and GPA verification forms for various grants
  - If required, request that transcripts be sent
  - Double check graduation and college requirement progress
- **FEBRUARY:**
  - File FAFSA no later than February date required.
  - File **College Scholarship Service Profile**—if you are applying for financial assistance from the Kamehameha Schools Foundation. Be careful to check deadlines.
- **MARCH:**
  - Plan summer activities: school work or community service
  - Apply to community college and take placement exam if you are intending to go to a community college.
- **APRIL:**
  - Register for summer classes at a community college
  - Research summer jobs and update portfolio/resume for jobs
  - Return **intent to register forms** to your chosen school
  - **Notify colleges that you are NOT attending as a courtesy to those schools.**
- **MAY/JUNE:**
  - Get a job and save money for college
  - Notify Counseling Department of college awards, grants, and scholarship for the graduation program and for the school's records
  - Ensure that your final transcript is sent to your chosen college by contacting the counseling secretary. We cannot send transcripts unless you give authorization **in written form** to the counseling secretary.
  - **Thank those who have helped you—especially the people who wrote letters of recommendations for you.**
- **SUMMER:**
  - **Find a job to assist your parents in funding your education.**

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