

College Planning Timeline

Sophomore Year

October

- Take PSATs

Spring

- Start focusing on areas that you may need to work on for SATs

Summer

- Start looking at schools according to major requirements (ie: location, majors offered, etc.)

Junior Year

October

- Take PSATs
- Read about majors and careers

March

- Students and guardians attend TC College Planning Night

April

- Director of Guidance available to meet with parents and students for more specific planning
- Attend College Fairs
- Register for June SAT I
- Consider taking the ACT

May

- Make an appointment to confirm admissions strategy with Director of Guidance

Summer

- Visit colleges, talk with admissions staffs, request information
- Do something meaningful (ie: community service, work, travel, etc)
- Develop tentative list of schools – consider schools in the following categories based on who you are as a student; “reach”, “safety” & “possible”
- Begin thinking about and requesting letters of recommendation
- Study & prepare for fall SAT/ACT exams
- Create a Common Application Account

Senior Year

September

- Register for October SAT I or SAT II
- Create Common Application account if you haven't already
- *Must* meet with Director of Guidance if applying early admission/action to any college
- Begin writing college essay
- Narrow down your list of schools
- Visit your top schools again
- Schedule interviews with schools that require them
- Begin asking teachers/faculty for letters of recommendation
 - make request in person & through Naviance
- Attend College Planning Night for seniors

October

- Begin filling out applications
- Early admission/action applications due to Guidance Office by October 1
- Register for November SAT I or SAT II
- Complete CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE

November

- Start researching scholarship opportunities
- Complete all college applications
- All applications due to Guidance Office by Thanksgiving break
- Register for January SAT II

December

- Complete last minute applications
- Begin collecting FAFSA Data
- Continue researching scholarship opportunities
- All applications with January 1st deadlines **MUST** be completed with Guidance Office by December 15th

January

- Complete FAFSA Forms
- Attend FAFSA Night sponsored by Guidance Office

February – May

- College admissions decisions come in
- Keep your grades up through the second semester
- Continue to research scholarship and award opportunities

May

- Notify Guidance Office of college decisions as they come in

June

- Congratulations!
- Write letter or note of thanks to all teachers/staff who wrote letters of recommendation for you and supported you in the college process

Abbreviations and Commonly Used Terms

ACT	<i>American College Testing</i> Similar to the SAT, this test is required by many colleges in the West and Midwest. It is a four-part, three hour test focused on more class content than general assessment.
AP	<i>Advanced Placement</i> These are college-level courses offered in the high school setting. TCHS offers AP classes in: Biology, Calculus, English Language, English Literature, and U.S. History. Final exams are 3-hour tests given at the beginning of May.
College Board	A national agency that is in charge of many tests and services connected with the college admissions process. It is the parent company for PSAT, SAT I, SAT II, and AP tests.
College Rep visits	A number of college representatives come to visit TCHS during the fall semester. Seniors are allowed to sign up to meet with these representatives on the designated days to find out more information about a specific school or ask more specific questions.
CSS/Financial Aid Profile	Financial Aid program offered by the College Board, similar to the FAFSA. Most colleges now accept this form of aid application.
Early Action	This option is like Early Decision, however, is not binding like some Early Decision schools are. You must talk with the Director of Guidance if you are planning on applying Early Decision to a school. You will hear from Early Action schools earlier than Regular Decision schools, however, acceptance will not be binding. Early Action deadlines are often in early November.
Early Decision	This option is for students who have a definitive top college in mind. "Early Decision" is a way to let that school know that it is your first choice. Many colleges make applying Early Decision "binding." This means that if you are accepted to this college, you are required to go there. You must talk with the Director of Guidance if you are planning on applying Early Decision to a school. Early Decision deadlines are often in early November. If you are not accepted under Early Decision, you can defer to regular admissions.
FAFSA	<i>Free Application for Federal Student Aid</i> A detailed review of the family's income and assets. Completing this gives students access to Federal student monies.

Rolling Admission There is no specific application deadline. Applications are reviewed as they are received, and decisions are made within 6-8 weeks. Although there is no specific deadline, students are encouraged to apply early to these schools.

SAT I*Scholastic Assessment Test*

This test is required for admission into many colleges. It is the same format of the PSAT (Pre-Scholastic Assessment Test): Critical Reading, Math, and Writing. Each test is out of 800, totaling a possible 2400 points.

A limited number of test fee waivers are available in the Guidance office. You must qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch to receive a waiver.

Make sure you enter TCHS's CEEB code on your registration form (found on page 8) to assure that we receive your scores.

SAT II*Subject Tests*

These tests cover a variety of academic subjects and are designed to test your level of knowledge. Some colleges may request specific subject tests according to their admissions requirements.

Like the SAT I tests, SAT II tests are scored out of 800. *Be aware of the test dates. Not all subjects are given on every testing date.*

Tests are available in: Biology, Chemistry, Literature, Math level 1, Math level 2, Spanish, Physics, U.S. History, and many other subjects.

TOEFL*Test of English as a Foreign Language*

This test measures the ability of nonnative speakers of English to use and understand English as it is spoken, written, and heard in college and university settings.

This is an internet-based test (iBT) assessing four language skills important for effective communication: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Who is involved in this Process?

Trinity Catholic High School

Director of Guidance

- Provides information for all testing dates
- Coordinates College Representative visits during the Fall semester
- Mails transcripts, school report forms, & teacher recommendations
- Assists students in the self-evaluation & self-advocacy essential to college planning
- Supports advisors

Advisor

- Works closely with students to facilitate the college planning timeline
- Writes “Guidance Letter of Recommendation” (co-signed by the Director of Guidance)
- Signs “School Report Form” (co-signed by the Director of Guidance)
- Available to assist with applications and development of college essay

Teachers & Coaches

- Available to write “Teacher Letters of Recommendation”

Student

- Researches colleges and programs of interest
- Uses Naviance tools to prepare application materials & request letters of recommendation
- Completes the “Student” portion of the application:
 - Student essay
 - Application fee
 - Necessary supplemental materials
 - Sends SAT & all necessary standardized tests to each applicable college
- Follow up with each college to make sure all necessary materials have been received.
- Track acceptance status in Naviance
- Communicate scholarship awards to Miss Piendak **IN WRITING**

How to pick a College

Type of School	Certificate/Professional Programs Two Year Colleges Four Year Colleges
Location	New England Midatlantic South Southwest Midwest West Coast International
Campus Setting	Urban Suburban Rural
Size	small: 2,000 or under mid-size: 2,000-15,000 large: 15,000 +
Financial Aid	Public vs. Private schools & tuition In-state vs. Out-of-State tuition Availability of aid

Brief Self-Evaluation

Your goals and values

What aspects of your high school years have been most meaningful to you?

What do you care most about?

How do you define success? Are you satisfied with your accomplishments to date?

What kind of person would you like to become? Of your unique gifts and strengths which would you like to develop?

Your education

What are your academic interests? Which classes have you enjoyed the most? Which classes have been most difficult? Why?

In what areas of skills or knowledge do you feel most confident or least confident?

Have you been challenged by your courses?

Your activities and interests

What activities do you most enjoy outside the daily routine of classes and other responsibilities?

How would you describe your role in school or your home community?

What do you consider your most significant contribution?

Typical Questions Asked by College Interviewers

About your Academic Record and your High School

What subjects have you taken in high school? What are your favorite classes and why?

What books have you read that weren't required reading in the past year?

Describe your high school and the different groups within your class. Where do you fit in?

Describe the community in which you live and how you participate in it.

About your Activities, Interests, and Work Experience

What is/are your most important activit(ies)? Why?

What work or volunteer experiences have you had during school and your summers?

What have you learned from these experiences?

What are some qualities that may set you apart from other applicants?

What local, national, or global issues concern you most?

About your Interest in College

Who or what influenced you to consider this school?

What other colleges have you visited/applied to?

What attracted you to this college?

Writing Your College Essay

(Taken from Essays That Worked, edited by Boykin and Brian Kasbar.)

Before you start to write

1. Begin thinking about essay topics in the early fall.
2. Write a time-line of your life, noting special dates and important events.
3. Make a list of 5-6 possible essay topics and discuss them with your parents and teachers/mentors.
4. Find a quiet place, and “write” the essay in your mind.
5. Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to work on the essay before the deadline.

While you are writing

1. Make sure you are answering the prompt question appropriately.
2. Have a dictionary and thesaurus near by.
3. If you get “writer’s block,” try saying the essay out loud to a friend who can take notes.
4. Ask a teacher, parent, or guidance counselor for help.
5. Re-read your essay after a few days.

Before you finalize your essay

1. Double-check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes.
2. Make sure that the essay looks neat.
3. Does the essay “sound” like you?
4. Ask an adult to proofread your essay.

The 10 Commandments of Writing a College Essay

1. **Make every word count.** Unless there are specifics on the length, the essay should be 1 page long, 12 point, Times-New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins.
2. Do not try to tell your life story. **Pick an aspect to focus on and detail, detail, detail.** Use concrete examples of your own childhood, your hobbies, your family, etc.
3. **Do not use contractions** (i.e: don't)
4. Write in the *present tense*. (i.e.: "I am looking forward to college..." "I focus on this aspect because...")
5. Proofread multiple times. Typos and misspellings look very, very bad. Revise, REVISE, REVISE! **The more drafts you go through, the better.**
6. Avoid clichés (i.e.: My mother always said I would be a success.)
7. Tailor the essay to the school. Do not write about your desire to be a veterinarian if the school you are applying to does not have that major. Do adequate research of your schools before you write.
8. **Do not repeat details from the application.**
9. If there is more than one essay in the application, make them DIFFERENT. Do not cut and paste. It will not go unnoticed.
10. **WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE?** The admissions director reading your essay wants to know what makes you stand out. Make your topic interesting. Be creative. Grab the attention of the reader in the first few sentences.

Important Information for your Applications

Guidance Counselor:

Miss Melanie Piendak
Director of Guidance
Trinity Catholic High School
575 Washington Street
Newton, MA 02458
617-244-1841 x349
fax: 617-796-9175
mpiendak@trinitycatholic.com

CEEB Code

221-535

A limited number of application fee waivers are available in the Guidance office. Each student who qualifies is permitted 5 fee waivers from TCHS. Please see the Director of Guidance for more information.

Letters of Recommendation

Please give teachers/faculty a MINIMUM of 2 weeks to complete a recommendation letter. The more time you give them the better.

You MUST request your letters through Naviance as well as in person.

Be sure to tell those you ask that your student resume is available on Naviance.

Transcripts

There will be a \$5 charge per transcript over 6. Payments can be made with Miss Piendak. Cash or checks made payable to **Trinity Catholic High School** (*memo line: transcript fee*)

The Nine Most Common Errors Made on Applications

1. **Allowing mistakes in grammar and spelling** to slip through on the application.
2. Sending in an application marred by erasures, crossed-out words, and whited-out sentences.
3. **Selecting a major the institution does not offer.** Students can find out what majors a college does offer by looking in the college catalog or on the website.
4. Mentioning every school-sponsored club or activity the applicant ever had contact with, instead of only those in which he has actively participated.
5. **Failing to say in the personal essay what the applicant can contribute to the institution.**
6. **Not addressing either in the personal essay or in a cover letter, why certain grades or semester grades are poor.**
7. **Not following up** to make certain that all credentials required by the college have been received: transcript, recommendations, and test scores, in particular.
8. **Failing to send the processing fees** with the application.
9. Submitting the application after the stated deadline.

Important Policies

College Representative Visits

Seniors are permitted to miss three (3) classes to attend college representative visits during the fall semester. The schedule of visits will be posted in Naviance each September and will be updated regularly. Students are encouraged to plan their visits wisely.

College Campus Visits

Seniors are permitted two (2) excused absences during their fall semester to visit the campuses of their top college choices. Each student must receive pre-approval from the Director of Guidance to attend this college visit, and the student must inform his/her teachers that he/she will not be in class on that day. The student is responsible for all missed work during that day.

Financial Aid

Need-Based Assistance

<i>FAFSA</i>	Forms are available at the end of November, but cannot be submitted until after January 1. This form is free to all students.
<i>CSS/Profile</i>	This is completed on-line. Information on how to apply is available in the fall.
<i>Stafford Student Loan</i>	Federal program that is administered by private lenders. The loan is interest free while the student is in college and until repayment begins.

Merit-Based Assistance

These are awarded based on your high school and extra-curricular accomplishments. Many of these are privately-funded scholarships and need to be researched on an annual basis.

Internet Sites

www.finaid.org

www.fastweb.org

www.osfa.mass.edu/

www.fafsa.ed.gov

www.scholarships.com

www.salliemae.com

www.nelliemae.org

When You Apply To Colleges And Universities You Have Responsibilities

Before You Apply:

- You are responsible for researching and understanding the policies and procedures of each college or university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships, and housing.
- You should also be sure that you understand the policies of each college or university regarding deposits that you may be required to make before you enroll.

As You Apply:

- You must complete all material that is required for application, and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the sole author of your application.
- You should seek the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application period. Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.
- **You must send your SAT or standardized test scores to each school.** It is not the responsibility of the Guidance Office to forward along this information.
- It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.
- You must request letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches, mentors etc. AT LEAST 2 weeks in advance.

As You Receive Your Admission Decisions:

- You must notify each college or university that accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college that you wish to attend, but no later than May 1.
- You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one college or university. (The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a college or university and are later admitted to that institution. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify the college or university at which you previously indicated your intention to enroll, if applicable.)
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and universities and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.
- If you think that your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the president of the state or regional affiliate of the National Association for College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to Executive Director, NACAC, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2818.

Important Resources

People

TC alumni

Talk to friends who have graduated to see what college is all about. What do they like? What would they change? What would they suggest for you?

Admissions Offices

They are there to answer all of your questions about their school. Feel free to contact them at any time with any question. You want them to know your name as a potential student. The more contact you have with them, the better.

Books

College Viewbooks

The bookcase outside of the Guidance Office is filled with viewbooks from colleges from around the country. These books are great resources to find out what makes that college unique, what they require for admissions, what student life is like there, etc. You are welcome to borrow the viewbooks for a few days, but please return them to the shelves so that other students can look at them.

Testing Preparation

The Guidance Office has several helpful SAT, SAT II, ACT, & TOEFL testing preparation resources. Please visit the office to make arrangements to borrow & utilize them.

Internet

ACT

www.act.org

College Board

www.collegeboard.com

College Comparisons

www.collegiate.net

Common Application

www.commonapp.org

Kaplan

www.kaplan.com

Naviance

<https://connection.naviance.com/fc/signin.php?hsid=tchisma>

Peterson's

www.petersons.com

The Princeton Review

www.princetonreview.com

Naviance – WorkspaceK12 (Counselor’s Office & Family Connection)

Counselor’s Office

Counselor’s Office is a secure, web-based system for college and career counselors that allows counselors to collect and organize detailed information about students’ post-secondary plans. Features include:

- Managing college visit and open house schedules for the fall & allowing students to register on-line
- Publish local scholarship information and match students with awards
- Track college applications
- Store letters of recommendation in digital format
- Send Common App credentials (school report forms, mid-year reports, teacher evals, transcripts, and profiles)
- Manage student academic information; ie. SAT scores, current GPA, updated transcripts, etc.

Family Connection

Family Connection is a planning and advising website. Students and parents can update personal information directly through their accounts. Specific features include:

- Sign up for fall College Rep visits
- Research colleges
- Submit applications
- Request transcripts
- Request teacher recommendations
- Update personal resume
- Use College Match to find schools that have historically met the needs of students like you
- View college acceptance history (by school) for TCHS
- Receive email alerts & updates from the Guidance Office
- Track your application status
- Research scholarship opportunities and applications

Specific Details

- Registration numbers will be distributed by the Guidance Office to current junior students at the beginning of April during their junior year.
- All college planning will be done through this website
- Each student will set up personal account (username and password) during the spring of their junior year.
- Each student will complete the “Learning Style” and “Personality Style” during the spring of their junior year.

Be sure to visit the TCHS website and utilize the many resources and links available on the Guidance section at

www.trinitycatholic.com.