

The College Application Process

It's a little overwhelming, isn't it?

Let's start with the basics.

What's the difference between a university and a college? Universities generally offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees and are usually larger than colleges. It's more likely that you'll have a graduate student teaching assistant teaching your class at a university than it is at a college. Universities may be more interested in having faculty members who conduct research than colleges. Colleges are usually smaller than universities and if they offer graduate programs, they are very limited in what they offer. Colleges tend to offer a liberal arts curriculum instead of a professional curriculum (universities often offer both). Many colleges provide more opportunities for professors and students to interact.

Public versus private? Public schools are subsidized by tax revenues which generally makes them less expensive than private schools. This is also why out-of-state students pay more tuition (their tax dollars went to the colleges in their home state). Private schools receive their funding from private donations (companies or individuals) and from the tuition they charge. Grand Valley State University is a public school while Kettering University is a private school.

National versus regional schools? National schools are those where the majority of the students attending it came from outside the state or region of the college. The University of Michigan and Michigan State University are both examples of national universities. Most public colleges are regional schools. Aquinas College would be an example of a regional school.

Other unique schools? Many schools are affiliated with a particular religion (Hope College, Calvin College, Cornerstone University), sex (Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College), or race (Alabama State University, Howard University).

What about the Ivy League? Some colleges and universities are known for their selectivity. Ivy League schools (like Harvard or Yale) are known for the difficulty of gaining admission. Northwestern University and the University of Michigan are also known as highly selective schools.

Sports? Many athletes recognize schools by their NCAA division (the National Collegiate Athletic Association). Commonly called Division I (or D-I) or Division II (or D-II), the difference between these is size and money. Division I schools are the most competitive athletically. They can offer full or partial scholarships and are usually larger schools. Division II schools are usually smaller in size than D-I and are more restricted on their athletic aid. Both D-I and D-II schools have eligibility requirements for their athletes. Division III schools have no academic eligibility requirements and do not get scholarship assistance through the NCAA.

Now that we know some general differences, let's get to the nitty-gritty. What are the differences for admissions purposes? The College Board says that colleges look at the following items, in order of importance: school achievement, standardized test scores, recommendations, essay, interview, and athletics. Colleges want to see that you took a college preparatory course load. The Michigan Merit Curriculum insures that all Michigan students have received a college preparatory course load because it

includes 4 years of English, 4 years of math, 3 years of social studies, 3 years of science. Colleges would also like to see at least 2 years of foreign language and the class of 2016 has that requirement for Michigan as well. The following chart gives you an idea of what some schools in Michigan are looking for, academically.

Name	ACT	GPA	
Adrian College	none	none	
Alma College	22	3	
Aquinas College	23	3.3	
Central Michigan	22	3.3	
Cornerstone University	19	2.5	
Davenport University	none	none	
Eastern Michigan	21	3.08	
Ferris State	15	2.25	
Grand Valley State	21-26	3.3-3.8	
Hope College	26	3.6	
Kettering University	24-28	3	
Lake Superior State	21	3.1	2.4 and 18 get reviewed, range is 19-24 and 2.7-3.4
Michigan State	25	3.5	
Michigan Tech	20		
Northwood University	20	2.7	
Oakland University	any	3.2	lower than 18 gets reviewed, 2.5 will be reviewed
Saginaw Valley State	17	2.5	
University of Michigan	25-30	3.0+	
Wayne State	any	2.75	2.0-2.74 w/21
Western Michigan	22	3.3	

The only thing left is a timeline!

You can't start thinking about college too early. Always do the best you can in school to be prepared for whatever career you may decide to pursue. But you should for sure be thinking about colleges by your junior year. Some students start taking the ACT at the end of their sophomore year, others wait until the beginning of their junior year. Spend as much time as you can visiting colleges your junior year. Spring break is great because you don't miss any school here and you have the opportunity to see the college campus in full swing. This section of our web page has some questions you should ask and things to look for on your college campus tours. Even though we have college admissions representatives visit our school, there is no replacement for a college tour. On that note, do your best to get to a college fair, too! These are large events held around the state where many school representatives all come on the same afternoon or night (sometimes more than 50 schools!) and you have the opportunity to meet them and ask questions. It's like the college visits at school, only multiplied by 50.

As summer after junior year comes to a close, you should be narrowing down your college search. We like the college applications to start rolling in in August, but the general rule of thumb is to have applied to your top choices by Halloween of your senior year. Then, it's the waiting game. Most schools in Michigan use rolling admissions. This means that they start admitting students in October or so and just keep going until they've reached capacity. For some schools, like Northern Michigan, you will often hear if you were accepted or not within two or three weeks of applying (and by text message, no less!). Other schools, like Michigan State, may take up to eight weeks to notify you of a decision. This section of our web site includes a handout called "Types of Admission" that details for you the different types of college admission you may be offered.

If you haven't heard from a school by January, don't wait for a response to file your FAFSA. Get it filed! If you applied early and are wondering where your application is in the process, feel free to contact the admissions office at your schools of interest and they will be happy to tell you how it's going.

When you hear from a college, there are a couple of different responses. Rejection. Ouch, that hurts. Admission. All right, you got in! Some students are put on a waiting list. This means that the school has reached its capacity, but if someone decides not to attend, they'd really like you to attend. And some students are deferred. That means that the school would like to see your 7th semester grades (the grades ½ way through senior year) before making a final decision. If you have a question about the letter or phone call you received about your admission, feel free to check in with your guidance counselor.

Once you've been accepted, it's important to pay attention to the deadlines and requests the school makes. You'll have deposits due, orientation to sign up for, and more.

Well, that's it (in a nutshell)!