

CLASS of
2016

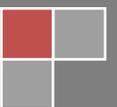
College and Career Success Handbook

One School. One Goal.
College Readiness.

Counseling, College and Career Success Team

Ms. Norman, Post-Secondary Coach

Ms. Mathews, Lead Counselor



Dear Future Graduate,

This will be an exciting year, and you have worked extremely hard to get to this point in your high school journey! We want to make sure you enjoy the time you have left here at Bowen, and finish STRONG.

The 2016 College & Career Success Handbook is designed to help you navigate your final year of high school, and to help make your transition to college, career, or military as smooth as possible. In order for this to happen, every senior will be required to complete the following goals:

- Every senior will complete 5 college applications by December 4, 2015: 3 MATCH, 1 SAFETY, and 1 REACH
- Every senior will use Naviance to track college applications
- Every senior will complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by February 19, 2016
- Every senior will complete a Net-Price Calculator for the college of their choice
- Every senior will complete at least 5 scholarship applications
- Every senior will participate in at least 2 college fairs or campus visits
- Every senior will maintain 90% attendance or better
- Every senior will participate in Senior Day of Action and Decision Day
- Every senior will complete a Senior Petition
- Every senior will meet with Ms. Norman one-on-one at least TWICE during the school year

All of the goals above are set to ensure you are college and career ready upon graduation. Every year Bowen students enroll in colleges & universities across the country and that tradition will continue with YOU! It is our job to make sure you are aware of the many opportunities available to you. Feel free to see Ms. Norman any time if you have questions or concerns, or want advice about what you can do to make sure your senior year and transition to college are successful.

One School. One Goal. College Readiness

Your success,

Ms. Norman, Post-Secondary Coach
Ms. Mathews, Lead Counselor

College Planning Calendar

September

- Re-take the ACT. See page 7 for dates & details.
- Meet early in September with your counselor to ensure that graduation requirements have been met, including Service Learning and all non-credit requirements.
- Make an appointment with your post-secondary coach to exchange all contact information and review your college choice list.
- If you have received any course credit from summer school, American School, college credit, or evening school, please submit a copy to your counselor as soon as possible so it can reflect on your transcript.
- Re-take the ACT exams, if needed. Dates are included in this packet on page 6.
- Obtain college applications in the College & Career Resource Center or by going to the college's website.
- Check with your post-secondary coach for college representative visit information.
- Ask your post-secondary coach for a calendar of upcoming college & career fairs and campus tours
- See your post-secondary coach for a copy of the 2015/2016 CPS Scholarship Guide.
- If you are an athlete who wants to participate at the college level, ask your athletic coaches and post-secondary coach for NCAA or NAIA information.
- Complete Net Price Calculator for two colleges.
- Create a list of college and scholarship application deadlines, and make reminders for yourself.

October

- Keep grades up. They still count!
- Re-take the ACT. See page 7 for dates & details.
- Meet with your counselor to review your applications and narrow down your college list.
- As you complete your college applications, add them to Naviance.
- Meet with college representatives who may visit during lunch.
- Plan interviews if required and/or offered. Visit colleges while the students are in attendance.
- Work on personal statement and other college essays.
- Send in early decision and early action applications for early deadlines.
- Continue research for scholarship information; use the Scholarship Guide and other sites as a resource.
- Ask for letters of recommendation from staff member and teachers at least 2 weeks in advance.
- Complete Net Price Calculator for two colleges.

November

- Keep those grades up. They still count!
- Re-take the ACT for December. There is no test in November. See page 7 for dates & details.
- Work on applications! Review and proofread applications and essays with counselor, teachers, and parents.

- Submit regular and rolling application deadlines. Submit applications early. Make sure you complete all five before winter break!
- Continue scholarship search; use the Scholarship Guide and other sites as a resource.

December

- Re-take the ACT and/or SAT.
- Make sure your progress report is strong—the higher your GPA, the more money in scholarships; use the Scholarship Guide and other sites as a resource
- Inform Ms. Norman of any acceptance letters as you receive them & listen for your name in the daily announcements

January

- Submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1st as possible! Bowen's deadline is **Friday, February 12th**. Include the names and codes of each school you are applying to on your FAFSA.
- If colleges request grades from fall of senior year, please let Ms. Norman know using Naviance.
- If you have been accepted under a binding early decision plan, you must withdraw all other applications.
- Make sure that all of the colleges you have applied to have received everything. You may also want to set up interviews or tours on the campuses, in which you are most serious.
- Work on scholarship applications.
- Again, continue to work hard and study!

February

- Continue to keep the counselors informed of any acceptance letters.
- Mail new information, such as improved 3rd quarter grades or higher ACT scores to colleges that are considering your application. Send any new information that will make your application stronger.
- Continue scholarship search; use the Scholarship Guide and other sites as a resource
- Inform Ms. Norman of any acceptance letters as you receive them & listen for your name in the daily announcements.
- Most colleges require a deposit in May to hold your spot. Let your parents know now, so they will be prepared to pay the deposit.

March

- Complete FAFSA updates if parents have completed taxes
- Submit tax forms to the Financial Aid Officer of the colleges that request them
- Mail new information, such as improved 3rd quarter grades or higher ACT scores to colleges that are considering your application. Send any new information that will make your application stronger.
- Be on the lookout for your financial aid award letter. This is how the college lets you know how much money you will receive in scholarships and grants.
- Continue scholarship search; use the Scholarship Guide and other sites as a resource
- Inform Ms. Norman of any acceptance letters as you receive them & listen for your name in the daily announcements.

- Most colleges require a deposit in May to hold your spot. Let your parents know now, so they will be prepared to pay the deposit.

April

- After tax deadline (April 15th) make corrections to FAFSA will current tax information
- Look for your acceptance letters. This is the time when most colleges respond.
- Make an appointment with Ms. Norman to make sure your colleges have received all of the information they need.
- Mail new information, such as improved 3rd quarter grades or higher ACT scores to colleges that are considering your application. Send any new information that will make your application stronger.
- Be on the lookout for your financial aid award letter. This is how the college lets you know how much money you will receive in scholarships and grants.
- Most colleges require a deposit in May to hold your spot. Let your parents know now, so they will be prepared to pay the deposit.
- **May 1st** is College Decision Day. Accept to the college of your choice in writing by **May 1st**. Inform your family & Ms. Norman. Let all colleges know when you have made a final decision

May

- College Decision Day is **May 1st**! Be proud of your choice and let the rest of the school know your decision.
- Make an appointment with Ms. Norman to make sure your colleges have received all of the information they need.
- Be on the lookout for your financial aid award letter. This is how the college lets you know how much money you will receive in scholarships and grants. Accept your financial aid award by signing and returning the award letter.
- Most colleges require a deposit in May to hold your spot. Let your parents know now, so they will be prepared to pay the deposit.

June

- Make sure Ms. Norman has your most up-to-date contact information!
- Attend any orientation days offered by your new college.
- Send thank you letters to anyone who helped you through, such as teachers who wrote your letters of recommendation or proofread essays, and for any scholarships you received.
- Graduate, and have a good summer – YOU DESERVE IT!

CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2016!

College Application Process

Please adhere to the following procedures for processing all college and scholarship applications:

1. Meet with Ms. Norman to review your applications before you submit them. If you completed your application online, you **MUST** forward an emailed copy of your confirmation page so we know the application was submitted.
2. Once you have submitted proof of your application, use Naviance to let Ms. Norman know that you have applied and that your transcript and ACT score need to be sent.
3. All college applications must include **2-3 letters of recommendations**. Please give the recommender a minimum of ten days to write a recommendation. Attached you will find a copy of the brag sheet to give to your recommenders. **Deadline to have letters ready is Friday November 20, 2015.**
4. Transcripts and ACT scores will be mailed electronically. Recommendation forms/letters will be sent separately via email or fax. Please make sure Ms. Norman receives all of your documents together so they can be sent at the same time.

Important Things to Do This Year

Complete FREE APPLICATION FOR STUDENT AID (FAFSA) by Friday February 19, 2015

- All colleges require filing of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Financial Aid presentations will be held at Bowen throughout the fall, during parent nights and in the classrooms.
- You can begin filing for financial aid after January 1st since the forms rely on tax information from the prior year. You can use information from your W2 or prior year, yet will need to update FAFSA after taxes are filed.
- The FAFSA website is: www.fafsa.gov. **(Remember the FAFSA is FREE!)**
- Attend Bowen's FAFSA Completion Workshops in January and February.

Completing the FAFSA is a graduation requirement! Failure to complete the FAFSA or attend any of the offered FAFSA workshops will result in you not being able to participate in any senior activities.

Complete NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA)

- All athletes expecting to participate at the collegiate level should submit their transcript to the NCAA Clearinghouse.
- Forms are available at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net.
- You must print the form to send with an official transcript.
- Complete the transcript request form from guidance (signed by parent if you are not 18 years of age).

- Have official test scores sent to NCAA – (code 9999) Instructions for sending scores at www.act.org and www.collegeboard.com.

Send ACT/AP SCORES TO SCHOOLS

- Register to retake the ACT. When you register for the test, you can list a certain number of colleges to receive your score,
- If never sent your scores when you took the test— you will have to arrange for the scores to be sent directly from the testing agency.
- To send ACT scores, contact ACT at 319-337-1313, or access your ACT account by visiting www.actstudent.org. If you need assistance, please see your counselor. There is a charge to have scores sent, so you will need a credit card with you when you call or enter the request online. You will also need the college's ACT Code number (available in the ACT Registration Booklet or online at www.actstudent.org). To pay by check or money order, visit www.actstudent.org, search for the "Additional Score Report" form (ASR), complete the form, and mail it with payment to the address on the form.

ACT

Apply on line: www.actstudent.org

Registration Dates and Deadlines

2015-2016

Saturday Test Dates	Registration Deadline	Late Registration
October 24, 2015*	September 18, 2015	September 19 – Oct. 2
December 12, 2015*	November 6, 2015	November 7 - 20
February 6, 2016	January 8, 2016	January 9 - 15
April 9, 2016	March 4, 2016	March 5 - 18
June 11, 2016*	May 6, 2016	May 7 - 20

*Bowen is an ACT National test site! Take the ACT here at Bowen on any of the marked dates

ACT Fees*

ACT (no writing) -----\$39.50
ACT Plus Writing -----\$56.50
Late Fee: An Additional ----- Add \$25.00
Standby testing on test day----- Add \$49.00
Test Date Change----- Add \$24.00

***IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE/REDUCED LUNCH, SEE MS NORMAN FOR A FEE WAIVER TO RETAKE THE ACT AT NO CHARGE**

Selecting the College/University that's Right for You

Searching for and applying to colleges, can be a stress free process. You will find decisions easier to make if you have up-to-date and thorough information about the colleges you are considering.

- The first step in researching colleges is to examine your own interests, goals, and plans for the future. What's Next Illinois is an excellent resource in this process.
- Next, find colleges with the specific characteristics you are looking for. You can do this through websites such as College MatchMaker (http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/adv_typeofschool.jsp).
- Attend college fairs, tours and workshops.
- Narrow your list to 5-8 schools:
 - i. One or two colleges where you feel you'll most likely get in—a 90-100 percent chance. These are usually called "safeties". Safety Schools are colleges/universities with flexible admissions standards.
 - ii. Two to four colleges that are overall good "matches"—a 75 percent chance of getting in. Match Schools have general admission criteria that you fulfill and you feel will meet your needs and desires and you would happily attend even if this may not be your first choice.
 - iii. One or two "Reach Schools"—a 25 percent or less chance of getting in. These are colleges that present an admissions challenge because they have very competitive admissions criteria.
 - iv. Complete your applications following the instructions listed on the College and Scholarship Application Process handout in this manual.

Making the Most of a College Fair /College Visit

Things to Consider Before the College Fair:

- Do you want to attend a large university or a small college?
- What programs of study do you want to pursue?
- Do you want to participate in sports or other activities?
- How far from home do you want to go?
- Do you want a college in an urban environment? Small? Rural?
- Do you require special services such as tutoring, readers or interpreters?

Things to Do at the Fair:

- Visit the Transfer Center table, if you have questions or need help with your college search.
- Try to attend one of the admission and financial aid information sessions.
- Try not to take brochures from every college, just the ones you are interested in attending.

What to Ask College Representatives:

- How can I arrange a campus visit?
- What are the admission requirements for transfer students?
- What types of scholarships are available?
- What are the application deadline dates for admission and financial aid?
- What student support services are available for students?
- What are the costs – including tuition, room and board, fees? etc.
- What is the average financial aid package for students?
- How many students live on campus? What percentage of the student body is residential? Commuter? Do you have family housing?
- How safe is your school? What is the ethnic/racial composition of the student body?
- What is the average class size? What is the ratio of professors to graduate teaching assistants?

College Match Profile

- College Match is the process of encouraging students to apply and enroll in colleges which match their academic profile.
- Match is determined by the academic profile of a student, which is based on a combination of factors including grade point average, test scores and rigorous course completion.
- We use College Match to help get students started with the application process.

UNWEIGHTED GPA

		< 2.0	2.0 - 2.4	2.5 - 2.9	3.0 - 3.4	3.5 - 4.0
COMPOSITE ACT SCORE	Missing ACT	<u>2-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>NON-SELECTIVE 4-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>
	< 15	<u>2-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>NON-SELECTIVE 4-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>
	15 - 17	<u>2-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>NON-SELECTIVE 4-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>
	18 - 20	<u>NON-SELECTIVE 4-YEAR COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE / VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>
	21 - 23	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE / VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE / VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>
	24 +	<u>SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE / VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>SELECTIVE / VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>	<u>VERY SELECTIVE COLLEGES</u>

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

Naviance:

<http://connection.naviance.com/bowenhs>

Scholarships:

www.zinch.com

www.collegeboard.com

www.fastweb.com

www.courseadvisor.com

www.gocollege.com

www.collegegreenlight.com

www.educationconnection.com

www.chooseyourfuture.org

College Searches:

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

www.collegebound.net

whatsnextillinois.org/

Test Preparation:

www.revolutionprep.com

www.princetonreview.com

www.kaplan.com

www.testprep.com

Online College Tours:

www.campustours.com

www.ecampustours.com

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Bowen High School
2710 East 89th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60617
(773) 535-7650 office
(773) 535-6930 fax
www.bowenhs.org

CEEB High School Code: 140-882

COUNSELING & COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS TEAM

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“College is POSSIBLE... Choose your FUTURE”

Name _____ ID# _____ Date _____

Recommendation Brag Sheet

In an effort to get the best letter of recommendation possible, please answer all of the questions. PLEASE PRINT. (Attach your Resume if you have one)

What are your most important characteristics?

Personally _____

Academically _____

What sets you apart from other students? _____

Why do you feel you will be well suited for the college/university of your choice?

What are the first words that come to your mind that describes yourself? _____

What are some of your special accomplishments and/or talents? _____

What is your scholastic promise and achievement? _____

Describe your academic abilities _____

Describe your overall performance and leadership in extracurricular, community, or work activities _____

List your personal strengths _____

List your personal weaknesses _____

List your Awards/Honors received during your high school career _____

List your activities in school _____

List any clubs/teams you've participated in (in school and out of school activities)

List your hobbies _____

List your job experiences _____

List any volunteer experiences _____

List your future plans _____

List any other information that you would like mentioned in your recommendation

A great application essay will present a vivid, personal, and compelling view of you to the admissions staff. It will round out the rest of your application and help you stand out from the other applicants. The essay is one of the only parts of your application over which you have complete control, so take the time to do a good job on it. Check out these tips before you begin.

Dos

Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal

Your essay must prove a single point or thesis. The reader must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Try having someone read just your introduction to see what he thinks your essay is about.

Essays that try to be too comprehensive end up sounding watered-down. Remember, it's not about telling the committee what you've done—they can pick that up from your list of activities—instead, it's about showing them who you are.

Prove It

Develop your main idea with vivid and specific facts, events, quotations, examples, and reasons. There's a big difference between simply stating a point of view and letting an idea unfold in the details:

- **Okay:** "I like to be surrounded by people with a variety of backgrounds and interests"
- **Better:** "During that night, I sang the theme song from Casablanca with a baseball coach who thinks he's Bogie, discussed Marxism with a little old lady, and heard more than I ever wanted to know about some woman's gall bladder operation."

Be Specific

Avoid clichéd, generic, and predictable writing by using vivid and specific details.

- **Okay:** "I want to help people. I have gotten so much out of life through the love and guidance of my family, I feel that many individuals have not been as fortunate; therefore, I would like to expand the lives of others."
- **Better:** "My Mom and Dad stood on plenty of sidelines 'til their shoes filled with water or their fingers turned white, or somebody's golden retriever signed his name on their coats in mud. I think that kind of commitment is what I'd like to bring to working with fourth-graders."

Don'ts

Don't Tell Them What You Think They Want to Hear

Most admissions officers read plenty of essays about the charms of their university, the evils of terrorism, and the personal commitment involved in being a doctor. Bring something new to the table, not just what you think they want to hear.

Don't Write a Resume

Don't include information that is found elsewhere in the application. Your essay will end up sounding like an autobiography, travelogue, or laundry list. Yawn.

- "During my junior year, I played first singles on the tennis team, served on the student council, maintained a B+ average, traveled to France, and worked at a cheese factory."

Don't Use 50 Words When Five Will Do

Eliminate unnecessary words.

- **Okay:** "Over the years it has been pointed out to me by my parents, friends, and teachers—and I have even noticed this about myself, as well—that I am not the neatest person in the world."
- **Better:** "I'm a slob."

Don't Forget to Proofread

Typos and spelling or grammatical errors can be interpreted as carelessness or just bad writing. Don't rely on your computer's spell check. It can miss spelling errors like the ones below.

- "After I graduate *form* high school, I plan to work for a nonprofit organization during the summer."
- "From that day on, Daniel was my best *fried*."

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.

Keep In Mind:

In writing the essay you must bear in mind your two goals: to persuade the admissions officer that you are extremely worthy of admission and to make the admissions officer aware that you are more than a GPA and a standardized score, that you are a real-life, intriguing personality.

Three Steps to a Great College Essay You, in 500 Words or Less

The college application essay is a chance to explain you, to open your personality, charm, talents, vision, and spirit to the admissions committee. It's a chance to show you can think about things and that you can write clearly about your thoughts. Don't let the chance disappear. Stand up straight and believe in yourself!

The Essay Writing Process

Okay, boot up your computer and let's get to it. To write a college essay, use the exact same three-step process you'd use to write an essay for class: first pre-write, then draft, and finally, edit. This process will help you identify a focus for your essay, and gather the details you'll need to support it.

Prewriting

To begin, you must first collect and organize potential ideas for your essay's focus. Since all essay questions are attempts to learn about you, begin with yourself.

- **Brainstorm:** Set a timer for 15 minutes and make a list of your strengths and outstanding characteristics. Focus on strengths of personality, not things you've done. For example, you are responsible (not an "Eagle Scout") or committed (not "played basketball"). If you keep drifting toward events rather than characteristics, make a second list of the things you've done, places you've been, accomplishments you're proud of; use them for the activities section of your application.

- **Discover Your Strengths:** Do a little research about yourself: ask parents, friends, and teachers what your strengths are.
- **Create a Self-Outline:** Now, next to each trait, list five or six pieces of evidence from your life—things you've been or done—that prove your point.
- **Find Patterns and Connections:** Look for patterns in the material you've brainstormed. Group similar ideas and events together. For example, does your passion for numbers show up in your performance in the state math competition and your summer job at the computer store? Was basketball about sports or about friendships? When else have you stuck with the hard work to be with people who matter to you?

Drafting

Now it's time to get down to the actual writing. Write your essay in three basic parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

- The introduction gives your reader an idea of your essay's content. It can shrink when you need to be concise. One vivid sentence might do: "The favorite science project was a complete failure."
- The body presents the evidence that supports your main idea. Use narration and incident to show rather than tell.
- The conclusion can be brief as well, a few sentences to nail down the meaning of the events and incidents you've described.

An application essay doesn't need to read like an essay about *The Bluest Eye* or the Congress of Vienna, but thinking in terms of these three traditional parts is a good way to organize your main points.

There are three basic essay styles you should consider:

- **Standard Essay:** Take two or three points from your self-outline, give a paragraph to each, and make sure you provide plenty of evidence. Choose things not apparent from the rest of your application or light up some of the activities and experiences listed there.
- **Less-Is-More Essay:** In this format, you focus on a single interesting point about yourself. It works well for brief essays of a paragraph or half a page.
- **Narrative Essay:** A narrative essay tells a short and vivid story. Omit the introduction; write one or two narrative paragraphs that grab and engage the reader's attention, then explain what this little tale reveals about you.

Editing

When you have a good draft, it's time to make final improvements to your draft, find and correct any errors, and get someone else to give you feedback. Remember, you are your best editor. No one can speak for you; your own words and ideas are your best bet.

- **Let It Cool:** Take a break from your work and come back to it in a few days. Does your main idea come across clearly? Do you prove your points with specific details? Is your essay easy to read aloud?
- **Feedback Time:** Have someone you like and trust (but someone likely to tell you the truth) read your essay. Ask them to tell you what they think you're trying to convey. Did they get it right?

- **Edit Down:** Your language should be simple, direct, and clear. This is a personal essay, not a term paper. Make every word count (e.g., if you wrote "in society today," consider changing that to "now").
- **Proofread Two More Times:** Careless spelling or grammatical errors, awkward language, or fuzzy logic will make your essay memorable—in a bad way.

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.

Sample College Essay Questions What Do Colleges Want to Know?

Generally, there are three types of questions: The "you," the "why us," and the "creative." Here are tips and actual sample questions for each type. Don't assume that the questions are currently being used by a college (most colleges adjust questions annually).

The "You" Question

Many colleges ask for an essay that boils down to, "Tell us about you." The school just wants to know you better and see how you'll introduce yourself. For example:

- "Please complete a one-page personal statement and submit it with your application." (James Madison University)
- "How would you describe yourself as a human being? What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to see flourish and which would you like to see wither?" (Bates College)

Your Approach

This direct question offers a chance to reveal your personality, insight, and commitment. The danger is that it's open-ended, so you need to focus. Find just one or two things that will reveal your best qualities, and avoid the urge to spill everything.

The "Why Us" Question

Some schools ask for an essay about your choice of a school or career. They're looking for information about your goals, and about how serious your commitment is to this particular school. For example:

- "Why is UVM a good college choice for you?" (University of Vermont)
- "Please tell us about your career goals and any plans you may have for graduate study." (Westfield State College)

Your Approach

The focus is provided: Why did you choose this school or path? This should be pretty clear to you, since you probably went through some kind of selection process. Make sure you know your subject well. For example, if you say you want to attend Smith College to major in dance, the school will be able to tell how carefully you've chosen (Smith doesn't have a dance major).

The "Creative" Question

Some colleges evaluate you through your choice of some tangential item: a national issue, a famous person, what you would put in a time capsule, a photograph. Here the school is looking at your creativity and the breadth of your knowledge and education. For example:

- "Do you believe there's a generation gap? Describe the differences between your generation and others." (Denison University)
- "Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence." (Common Application)

Your approach

Again, you have something to react to, a way to show yourself and write about your real views. Just don't forget the importance of writing an informed essay. For example, don't write about a fantasy lunch with a famous writer and get the titles of her novels wrong. Also, when thinking about how creative to get, use common sense. Being creative to the point of wacky is a risk you may not want to take.

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.

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