



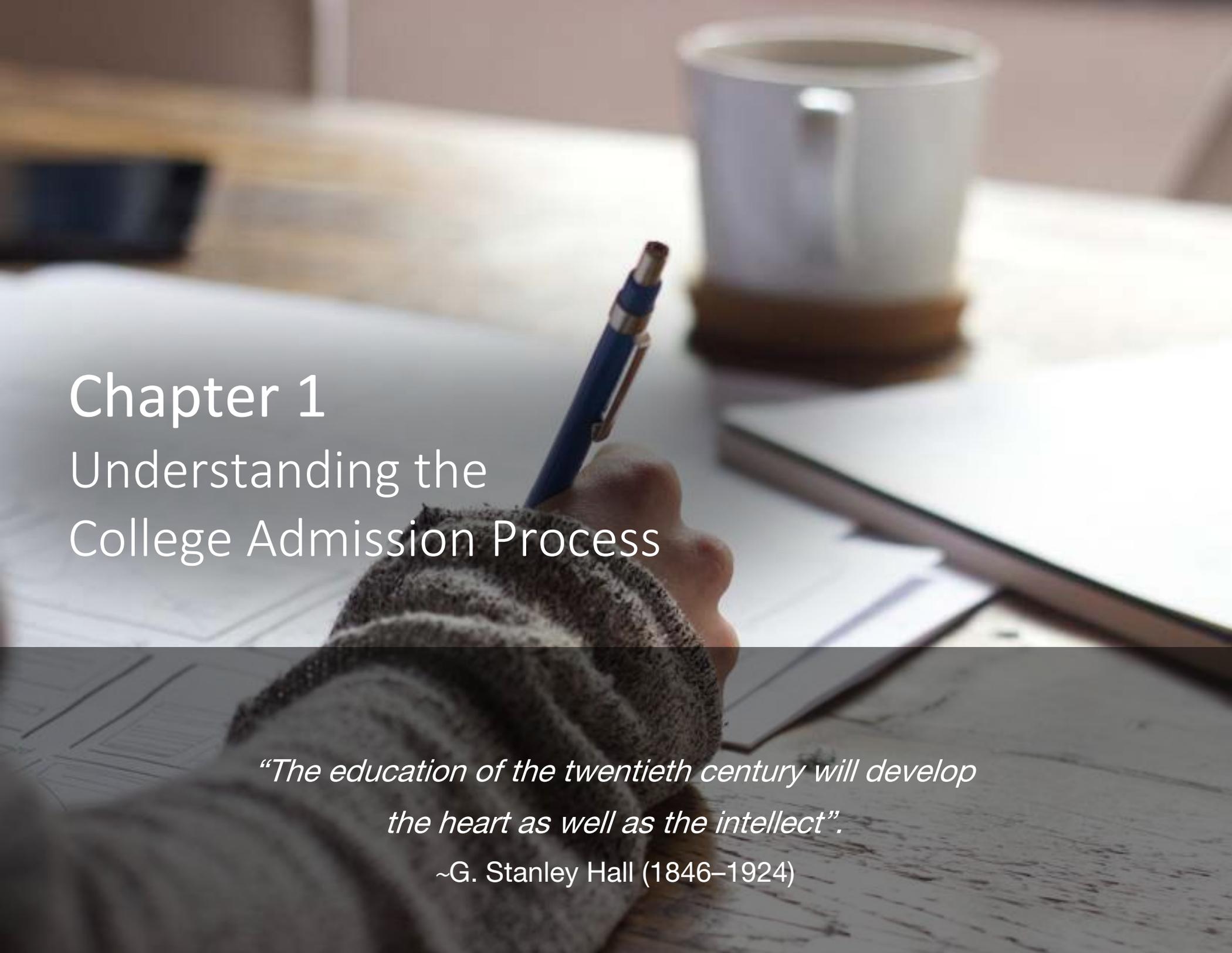
MatchCollege.com

Your  
*Complete Guide*  
to the  
**College Admission Process**

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A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hand holding a blue pen, poised to write on a document. The hand is wearing a grey, textured sweater. In the background, a white coffee cup with a brown base sits on a desk, and several sheets of paper are scattered around. The lighting is soft and natural, creating a focused and studious atmosphere.

# Chapter 1

## Understanding the College Admission Process

*“The education of the twentieth century will develop  
the heart as well as the intellect”.*

~G. Stanley Hall (1846–1924)

As you think about the next chapter of your life, you may have visions of what you would like to study or where you would like to go to college. Regardless of where you are at on that journey, it is our goal to help you better understand yourself and the higher education options available in order to make the most of your college experience. Making a great decision today will help with many follow-on decisions down the line. Likewise, eliminating colleges and career choices from your list(s) of consideration will help winnow down decisions to make them more tenable.

**What is the best college for you?** Please understand finding the best college is like asking someone the best move in chess. The answer to both questions: *it depends*. We will provide the platform to set you up for success. The work and time to achieve these goals is up to you.

**With so much information out there, where do I begin?** The beginning of the journey starts with introspection. It requires you to be very candid with yourself and ask some tough questions. Once you have a realistic picture of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and limitations the next steps in the process get progressively easier.

### **Let's get started!**

As you consider the questions below, it is important to surround yourself with people you trust to help you through the thickets. These individuals will be your sounding board and ask additional questions to help you make a decision for yourself. Your school counselor will also be there to guide you through specific steps and continue to ask questions to assist with the process.

The first step in the process is to address a series of questions that will lay the groundwork for everything else to come. Please take some time to think through the following questions as a means to improve the next steps.



*“The best way to ensure a successful transition from high school to college is through vigilant planning.”*

- What are my long-term goals?
- What do I enjoy doing? What do I not enjoy doing?
- Why do I want to attend college? How would this move me closer to my goals and career aspirations?
- Do I want a specialized degree (nursing, mechanic, software engineering, cosmetology, dental, etc.) or a liberal arts education?
- Is a two-year or four-year program a better fit for me?
- How important is cost in making a final decision?
- What type of financial assistance is available to me?
- Which grants and/or scholarships can I apply for?
- Will it be necessary to have a job while going to school? If so, what jobs are available and how will that fit with my school schedule?
- How important is it to attend a school near my home? Am I inclined to move to a certain part of the country versus another part of the country?
- Would I prefer a small or large college?



- How important is a diverse student body?
- How important is the population density in selecting a college albeit rural, metro, or a suburban setting?
- Would it be better to live on-campus or off-campus?
- Is joining a fraternity or sorority an important factor for me?
- Is competing in sports important? Would I be eligible for sports scholarships? If not, are intermural sports an important aspect of student life?
- Are my grades fit for a selective school?
- How rigorous do I want my academic life to be?
- Do I want a curricular design that fosters more independence or more collaborative work?
- Does my preferred area of study require teaching faculty with specialization and/or facilities with special services/equipment?
- How important is a classroom-based experience versus earning a degree on-line?
- Is graduate school important? Is it important to attend graduate school at the same institution as the college I earned my undergraduate degree?

*"It is recommended to leverage reputable websites such as **MatchCollege** to gather more specific information about each school.*

*Critical information to gather should include a **school profile, tuition, academic offerings,** and a means to gather more information from the school."*

**School Counselor.** It is important to understand your school counselor is a wonderful resource during this process. Be frank about your questions, apprehensions, and goals along with your athletic and/or academic resume. If you believe there will be an athletic component to your college experience, how many colleges have expressed interest in you joining their program? The more coaches and recruiters that support your endeavors, the increased likelihood of your ability to leverage athletics while enrolled in college. For the academic profile, please make sure you discuss grades, test scores, activities, class rank, and AP classes with your counselor.

As you build your list of preferred colleges and universities, it is important to note that they are actively seeking prospective students. They obtain information on you from the Educational Opportunity Service of ACT or SAT and from the Student Search Service of the College Board.

As you work with your school counselor, pay special attention to college visits to your school. Colleges and universities will often send representatives to high schools to meet with prospective students. As these opportunities present themselves, your best ally will to be prepared. This means: arriving on time, doing your homework on each prospective college, and asking good questions. Why? It is quite possible the college representative also sits on the admission committee. You never have another opportunity to make a first impression so make the most of it!

**School Visits.** After working on a short list of colleges to attend and spending time doing research on the internet about prospective colleges, it may be a great time to visit a few schools. A school visit will help to either solidify and prior decision or eliminate it from the running. Either way, visiting the school can be a productive use of time during your college search. During this process, be vigilant about application deadlines. Submit early and remember application for admission deadlines can differ from financial aid application deadlines so be aware and plan accordingly. Each college will set forth a schedule and policy for admission and you will be notified about your application accordingly.



*“The more information you have on each prospective school, the better equipped you will be to make decisions about the schools that remain on your list.”*

A photograph of a city skyline at dusk, featuring several tall skyscrapers with illuminated windows. In the foreground, a large reflecting pool mirrors the buildings and the sky. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall lighting is a mix of the warm orange and yellow of the setting sun and the cool blues of the twilight sky.

# Chapter 2

## Planning to Succeed

*“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.”*

*~Sydney J. Harris*

**Grades.** Make sure to talk with your academic counselor to ensure you are taking the right classes and have the grades to move to the next step in the process. Your grades are increasingly important in your Junior year as it sets the stage for the application process and can speak to trends in your effort. In other words, having a steady, predictable performance in the classroom is much better to prospective college admission teams than wild swings from good to poor and back again.

**Gathering and Organizing.** A fair amount of time and resources will be spent gathering quality information about prospective colleges. As such, the need to stay organized is essential. After spending time answering the questions from chapter 1 of this guide, you will be able to efficiently collect information about higher education institutions to add to your list. This list will continue to grow over time thus making the need to start organized and stay organized even more critical.

Utilize your counselor(s), your family, and your friends to collect feedback and critical advice. It will be through this process that decisions will become crystalized over time. Remember to ask questions and be open to an array of feedback. In addition to your family and friends, you can leverage key professionals to help guide your path.

It may be best to keep a file for each college during this phase of the process. As they send you information, you can keep the information in the file along with anything you have sent to the school. You may also want to construct a calendar of events by school to help you stay organized month over month. The calendar should include time to connect with your counselor, internet research, upcoming college fairs, application deadlines, college interviews, visits to prospective schools, test dates, financial aid deadlines, and a timeline for teacher recommendations to be submit.



***“If you fail to plan,  
You plan to fail.”***

**Receiving the help you need.** Your high school counselor can be a key resource to help provide insights, advice, and resources. In addition, they will provide you the necessary assistance to help determine the classes you need to take and when you should take them. The majority of the guidance offices will send prospective colleges your transcripts, grade point average, grades, and class rank to colleges. Start this process early and remain vigilant about keeping in touch with your counselor over time.

Hiring an independent counselor could be an option to consider if you believe additional guidance is necessary. These type of professionals can help you shape the college decision making process. As a word of caution, before hiring a third party to help with this process please make sure to validate their credentials. Ask for references, talk to college admissions counselors, and make sure to connect with former clients. If an independent counselor is employed to assist in your quest to determine the best college or university, please remember they can only provide advice and counsel. They should never push you towards a singular school, offer to fill out your application, guarantee the receipt of a grant or scholarship nor compose an essay on your behalf.

Utilizing the internet to gather information is an efficient and effective means to find out more about colleges and universities. A comprehensive, trusted service like [MatchCollege](#) that has helped millions and millions of students is the type of credible source to best accelerate your college search.

As you collect online and print materials about colleges, pay special attention to the academic requirements, upcoming campus tours, and application deadlines. In addition, make sure to overlay your school requirements and preferences with what each school offers. If there are special classes or requirements you need before applying to the school, make sure to take note of these items and act accordingly to increase your chances of gaining admission to the school(s) of your choice.

## College Tour Checklist:

- ✓ facilities
- ✓ dormitories
- ✓ talking to current students
- ✓ read the campus newsletter
- ✓ talk with faculty
- ✓ have a meal on campus
- ✓ visit a classroom,
- ✓ generate a list of great questions specific to your interests

**The College Interview.** If the college offers personal interview, make sure to sign up for it in advance. A couple key elements to the interview: be early, be well-dressed, and be prepared. Make sure to arrive early to the interview and let them know you are available to start any time. In terms of appearance, make sure to be well groomed and present yourself well. There will never be another opportunity to make a first impression so make the most of it. In terms of preparation, create a list of questions based on the college catalogue and their website. A few starter questions may include asking about:

- Can you tell me more about a specific major (ie. if you are interested in math, ask about more information about applied mathematics)
- What concerns are students talking about this school year?
- Can you tell me about the graduation rate and a percentage of freshman that return the following year?
- What social groups or activities are available to students?
- How would I plug into extracurricular activities?
- Does each student have an assigned counselor to help them map out classes year over year?
- What is the percentage of on-campus versus off-campus housing?

**Alumni Network Interviews.** Ask to see if the colleges you are interested in have an alumni network that requires you to interview with them. It's good for you to know that some schools require you to interview with some college alumni whether you have already completed a campus interview or not. This gives the college an opportunity to connect with you through their alumni network which serves a dual purpose for you to get to know the school better and them to get to know you better.



In addition to your questions about the school, you need to be prepared to answer some questions about yourself. At minimum, be ready to tackle the following questions:

- Tell me more about yourself.
- What are your goals while in college?
- What are your goals after college?
- What are you passionate about in life?
- Why do you want to attend college?
- Tell me why you would like to attend this college?
- What majors are you interested in at this point in your life?
- What books are you currently reading? What are the last 3 books you have read?
- What do you do with your free time?
- Do you have extracurricular activities that are important to you?

**Student Information Services.** It is important to note that some schools have eliminated the on-campus interview with an admissions officer in lieu of a group information session. This process change was designed to offer multiple students and parents an opportunity to learn about a college in a single session. A group information session coupled with a campus tour can go a long way to answer a litany of questions about a school. If you still have specific questions for an admissions officer after attending a campus tour and group information session, make a point to include a specific letter to accompany your college application.



*“Be yourself. Relax. Make great eye contact. Answer each question to the best of your ability. Be articulate and thoughtful.”*

A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing on a document. The person is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The right hand holds a blue and silver pen, and the left hand rests on the paper. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's torso and the document.

# Chapter 3

## College Information

*“Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army.”*

~Edward Everett

As you may imagine, colleges spend a significant amount of resources on providing current and prospective students valuable information about their programs. For current students, the focus of the publications is often centered around retaining students and introducing them to advanced degree opportunities. For prospective students, the goal is to share more about the school, campus life, course offerings, academic expectations, and future opportunities. Read these publications very carefully as valuable information can be teased from what is said and not said about the college of interest.

Obtaining specific information about the school is easier today than ever. You can check out [MatchCollege](#) to collect college-specific information on any school in the United States in one sitting or visit the school's website to collect information about a singular school. Let it be known, physically visiting a school will provide a the most complete picture of the school in question but school winnowing down choices based on your specific criteria will be a great starting point when visits are not plausible.

During your information gathering phase of the process, it will be important to take note of the following elements:

**What are the Admission Requirements:** What are the published criteria for being accepted into a specific program? What is the acceptance rate at the school? What are the hard deadlines you need to adhere to with you college application?

**Locate a School Calendar:** A school calendar will have a host of information from the academic year to credit requirements to summer internships, paying special attention to the requirements of each school.

**Determining Faculty Pedigree:** It is frequently a positive sign to see faculty with diverse experience along with institutions the faculty attended. Published works are often another good indication of an engaged teaching team as endless hours are spent providing quality research for individuals in a specific field of study.

## 3 Primary Sources of Information

- ✓ **Viewbook** provides pictures to help a student gain insight into the college or university.
- ✓ **Course Catalog** is an information rich trove of courses offered, faculty listing, college rules, specific campus-related regulations, and general information about the school.
- ✓ **Website** display information about differing departments, admissions office information, student links, and faculty biographies.

**Graduation & Degree Requirements:** Once you have accepted admissions to a specific school, what will it take to earn a degree within your specific field of study? Take the time to understand the course requirements, credits required, and expected time to complete the degree.

**Programs:** How diverse are the course offerings and how easy/hard is it to switch tracks after the first year or two?

**Overall School Cost:** What will school cost to get started and what is the pathway beyond the first year? How competitive is the school's financial aid package, grants, and/or scholarship offerings?

**On-Campus Services:** What student services exist on-campus? It is important to understand the resources available from career counseling to alumni networking to health services and everything in between.

**Specialized Programs:** Make sure to ask if the school offers study abroad programs, cross-enrollment programs with neighboring colleges, or degree-specific credentials if these items are a priority for you.

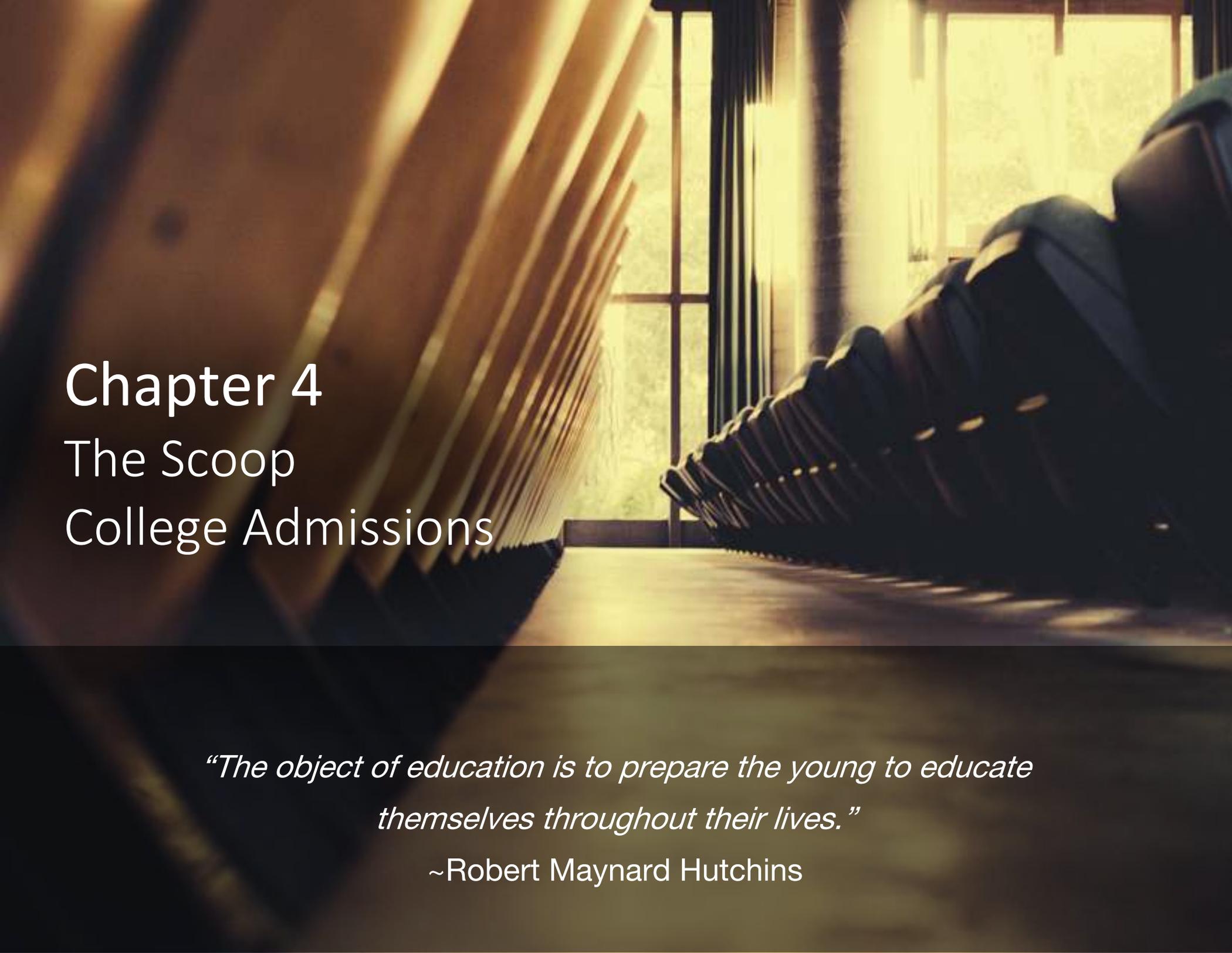
**On and Off-Campus Living:** What options are available to in-coming freshman? Options for transfers from another school? Is the quotient of on-campus living to off-campus living available? What types of housing is available to you, albeit dorm, condo, house, apartment, or other living arrangements? You then need to ask yourself how comfortable are you with the options provided?

**Sports Activities and School Sports:** Make sure to determine if the school's offerings for sports fits your needs. Some students will be very focused on athletics while others prefer to have time to gather socially and engage in a sports activity. Find out what is offered and what clubs the school offers early in the process.

In the end, make sure to remain open, inquisitive, take copious notes, and stay organized as the information about each school will differ.

## Secondary Sources of Information

- ✓ **Alumni Report** faculty updated, works published by faculty members, alumni updates, and upcoming events.
- ✓ **Published Works** magazines and journals by the school's faculty will be an indication of the emphasis placed upon the research and publication continuum.
- ✓ **Student Newsletter** give a prospective student a peek at campus life through the lens of student journalists.



# Chapter 4

## The Scoop

### College Admissions

*“The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.”*

~Robert Maynard Hutchins

As you may have already gathered, the college admission process is a two-way street. You are looking to make the best decision for you and the college is looking to make the best decision for them. The admission process is far more than just an application from you; rather, it is a holistic view of you, your character, aspirations, work-ethic, and determination to succeed.

**Application:** The application is the nuts and bolts about you, as a person. It will include personal information along with a biography of who you say you are as a person. Most applications have essays embedded within the application that offer you the platform to dive into your unique strengths, experiences, abilities, talents, weaknesses, and skills.

**Standardized Tests:** It is well-known that standardized tests have come under great a great deal of scrutiny in the last few years. That being said, the college admission team may apply a weighted average with the other pieces of your submission or discount the need for the standardized test entirely. That being said, if a college requires you to take a standardized test, it will be used during the evaluation process. A generally accepted belief is that larger colleges and universities rely more on the raw scores themselves to help determine admissions; while smaller schools apply greater emphasis on the other pieces of the process. That being said, an exceptional standardized test score does not ensure admission to the school of your choosing nor does an average score exclude you from certain programs. Your grades will carry a significant weight during the evaluation process so continue to work hard to maintain solid grades at every turn.

**Teacher Recommendation:** The college admissions committee will place weight on teacher recommendations as these often describe intangible, humanistic traits that are not always captured by a raw grade. Teachers will often illuminate personal characteristics, traits, classroom contributions, attunement, and respect that a letter/number grade simply cannot capture.



90% of College applications  
are submitted on-line

**-NACAC's study**

**Academic Record:** A highly critical portion of the process is your academic record, also known as your transcript. This is a summation of the classes you have taken along with the grade(s) earned for each respective class. Your grades, curriculum, and courses are assessed by the college admission team to ensure a deep understanding of your effort and ability in the classroom. When a class ranking system is not utilized by a high school, the GPA will be used in its stead to help gauge classroom acuity. Additionally, it is important to note the college admission team does take into account extracurricular activities, volunteering, memberships, and civic involvement in the process to round out the holistic process.

**School Recommendation:** The official recommendation curated by your school can be an important piece of the puzzle yet will remain a secondary factor behind your performance in the classroom.

Most things you do have a relative importance in this process – the work you do for non-profits, volunteering, sports, clubs, memberships, leadership traits, work, reading, writing, hiking, running, caring for a grandparent, honors awards, church participation, family traditions, baby-sitting, and goals you are particularly proud of accomplishing. All these items roll up into a holistic understanding of you.

It is important to understand the law of supply and demand with respect to the college admission process. When a school has a small number of students to accept compared to a large number of applicants, they can be (much more) selective. In addition to the sheer volume of applicants, the college admission team will shift to subjective personal traits when the applications are exceedingly similar. Thus, the need to spend quality time building an academic portfolio along with quality time illuminating you as a unique being with qualities and interest different from another applicant.

Remember, you are *unique*. There is no one on earth exactly like you & this needs to be translated to any group that has a hand in deciding your academic future.



*“There will be frustrations and anxiety along the way but know that proper planning will mitigate many of these feelings of self-doubt and increase your chances of getting into a great college.”*

# Chapter 5

## Transition Time



*“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.”*

~Robert Frost

**Completing the College Application.** It is worth noting as you get going with your college applications to take the time and read the instructions carefully. By taking a few extra minutes to really understand the question at hand, you will save yourself a considerable amount of time and dramatically increase your chances of receiving positive news from the school. Be vigilant when completing the forms and essay portions of the application. Read, re-read, spell check, proofread, and then finalize your application before considering it complete.

As stated earlier, nearly all college applications have migrated from paper to digital. There are two important services- *The Universal College Application* and *The Common Application* – that may be available to help streamline the process and fill out a single application instead of completing multiple forms.

**Submitting Standardized Test Scores.** As part of the application process, the responsibility is on you to provide any/all necessary standardized test scores to the college or university. While the standardized test scores are often sent with your transcripts, official scores are sent by ACT or The College Board directly to the college as a means to validate information submit.

During the registration of the standardized test, you will want to complete the forms to request The College Board or ACT send along your scores to specific colleges of your choosing. Additional test score forms can be picked up from your school’s guidance counselor, as needed. Make an extra effort to use the exact same information from form to form to avoid any issues or delays in the process with the ACT or The College Board.



## Tips for Your College Admissions Essay:

- ✓ Be sincere
- ✓ Articulate your thoughts in a clear manner
- ✓ Be true to your unique self

**Transcripts.** Your transcripts and/or school records are part of what is known as secondary school reports which are a core feature of your college submission. Your school will likely have specific processes around this so ask your counselor to provide specific information to ensure a clean hand-off to the colleges of your selection. Just as colleges have moved from paper applications to digitized applications, many high schools have shifted from paper to digital secondary school reports. The most popular programs, [Naviance](#), allows for the digital transmission of grades, transcripts, and the like directly to colleges to streamline their side of the process.

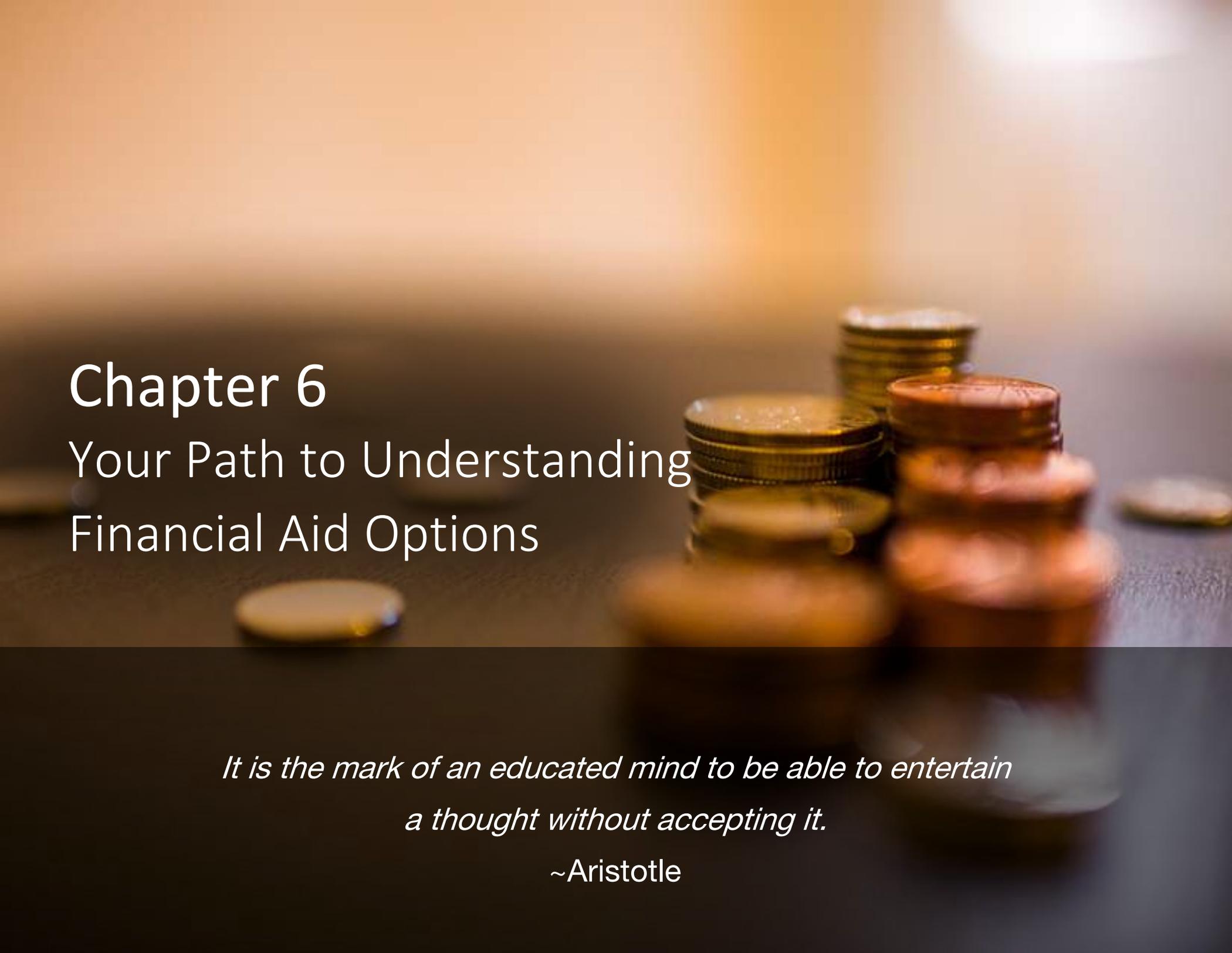
**Involving Your Teachers.** It is very likely you will ask for input and advice from your teachers to complete your college application. It is also likely a college or university will ask for teacher recommendations to add to round out your application. Make sure to be courteous and ask early in the school year, leaving plenty of time for your teacher to complete the recommendation. Your request should provide specific information such as which school you are applying to, if there are guidelines with the letter of recommendation, along with instructions how to send the letter to the college to ensure it gets married up with your ever-growing admission folder. It speaks volumes to your teachers if you keep them involved in the application process and give them updates as new information becomes available.

**Stay Focused.** As we have discussed, the most crucial part of the application process is the piece that is in your control: your grades. Stay focused on your academics - strive to stay on top of homework and tests regardless of the college application continuum. Once the colleges begin to communicate with you and provide formal decisions, carve out some time to figure out which schools are in your first tier and which ones no longer make the cut. From your primary choices, narrow the list to the best option and send in the deposit. As a courtesy to the other colleges, let them know once you have made your final decision so they can extend an opportunity to another prospective student.



## Tip:

- ✓ Complete the college applications that are high on your list *early* in your senior year.

The background of the slide features a close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of several stacks of coins on a dark, reflective surface. The coins are in various colors, including gold, silver, and copper. The lighting is warm and directional, coming from the upper right, which creates soft highlights on the edges of the coins and casts gentle shadows. The background is a smooth, out-of-focus gradient of warm tones, ranging from light beige to a darker, muted brown.

# Chapter 6

## Your Path to Understanding Financial Aid Options

*It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain  
a thought without accepting it.*

~Aristotle

## YOUR PATH TO UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS

It should come as no surprise to learn the cost of higher education is a significant investment. While the cost ranges significantly on the program, school, residency, and student qualifications, we will step you through the basics to understand how to best proceed given your unique situation. The agencies involved in financial aid can range from state, local, government, and institutions around the United States.

In most colleges, the admission department and financial aid department are not co-located in the same office thus decisions on each are often made independent of one another. Since the admission decision from the school comes first, you need to be prepared to respond in kind whether to accept the offer or not based on the financial aid options. While you are not in direct control of the admission process nor the financial aid process, you can increase your chances of both by investing your time in school and keeping your grades up.

**Determining need:** In order to ascertain financial aid for a student, most colleges and universities use a formula that looks like this:

$$SN = COA - EFC$$

What does this mean? Simply put, this is the cost of attendance (**COA**) less your expected family contribution (**EFC**) to figure out student need (**SN**). Since the cost of attending a college is determined by each school and part of their disclosures to each student, we will spend some time with the EFC.

The EFC is comprised of the amount of money your parents can pay from their income and assets plus your contributions from income and savings plus any contributions from a gift that does not have to be repaid. Financial aid should be viewed as a partnership between financial aid providers and a student's family. If the means are available to pay for school, a student will have a diminished opportunity to receive aid while those who are qualified but lack the means will receive more aid, generally speaking.



*“Billions upon billions of dollars are made available to students and it is incumbent upon you to understand the process and make the most of the financial aid available.”*

**Financial Aid.** In order to be considered for financial aid, a prospective student must complete a FAFSA. A FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid and may be the only application required, depending on the college. Since most schools have moved to digitizing the application process, you can hop online here and complete the form before the deadline. The FAFSA form opens you to the opportunity to receive Pell Grants, Perkins Loans, Federal Direct Loans, Federal Work-Study, state-based grants, and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program. Some schools do require a financial aid form specific to the school be completed called the CSS (College Scholarship Service) through the College Board.

Regardless of which forms you need to submit to the college of your choosing, make sure to be diligent about following directions and specific with your responses. Inaccurate information or missing data will likely have an adverse impact on the speed of processing your application and possibly the amount of aid you receive. It may seem like a lot to digest but it is a necessary step in the process to determine what aid is available for you're as you move into this exciting chapter of your life. If you need assistance, your guidance counselor or the Federal Student Aid Information Center (800-4FED-AID) is available to help.

**Grants:** Grants are based on need and do not require repayment from the recipient. The source of the grant may be either the school, the federal government, or the state. Grants are based on a student's financial need and the FAFSA determines the eligibility.

**Scholarships:** Like grants, scholarships do not need to be repaid; however, eligibility is based on merit, achievement, grades, and talents. Check with the college or university to see what scholarships are available through the school then check in with your counselor to see what they have to offer. Additional scholarship information and resources can be found [here](#) with MatchCollege.



*“The schools with the most expensive tuition often give the most financial aid.”*

**Work-Study:** Work-study is a type of aid that often is coupled with a grant or scholarship that allow a student to work and attend school concurrently to make money for school. Many employers participate in a work-study to help local college students gain valuable work experience while providing on-site training to benefit the company.

**Loans:** Unlike the other types of aid mentioned above, a student loan must be repaid (usually with interest). The types of loans vary from private loans to federal student loans to federal parent loans. Most federal student loans are based on need (ie. Perkins Loan program) and more information about the types of loans can be found at [here](#). While not the first option for most students, loans may be a necessary way to bridge your EFC with grants, scholarships, and work-study programs.

**The Financial Aid Process.** We will now move through the financial aid process step by step process to help ensure your success.

1. Send in your admission application to any/all colleges prior to their prescribed deadlines.
2. Invest a few minutes to obtain a rough idea of the cost of higher education by using the net price calculator the school provides on their website or through the Department of Education's [net price calculator](#) tool. These valuable tools will give you a working understanding of what to expect before any formal communication is provided from the school(s) you are applying to will provide.
3. Complete the FAFSA form before the [deadline](#) during your senior year and any other school-specific financial aid forms ahead of their prescribed deadlines. Being quick with your application to the college will help you understand your financial aid options, give you the opportunity to work with the financial aid department and secure your financial aid award(s).



4. The college admission team meets in an effort to ascertain your fit with their program. During this phase, they may or may not reach out to clarify questions they have about your application. Be prepared to accurately and professionally answer their questions.
5. If accepted, the college financial aid office will let you know what, if any, aid will be provided students being offered admission to the school. Awards will then be provided to applicants given the thresholds of the college or university.
6. Applicants will be notified by the admissions department and financial aid office of their respective aid package. Often this is performed in tandem with one another while other schools stagger the financial aid award package notification until a later date.

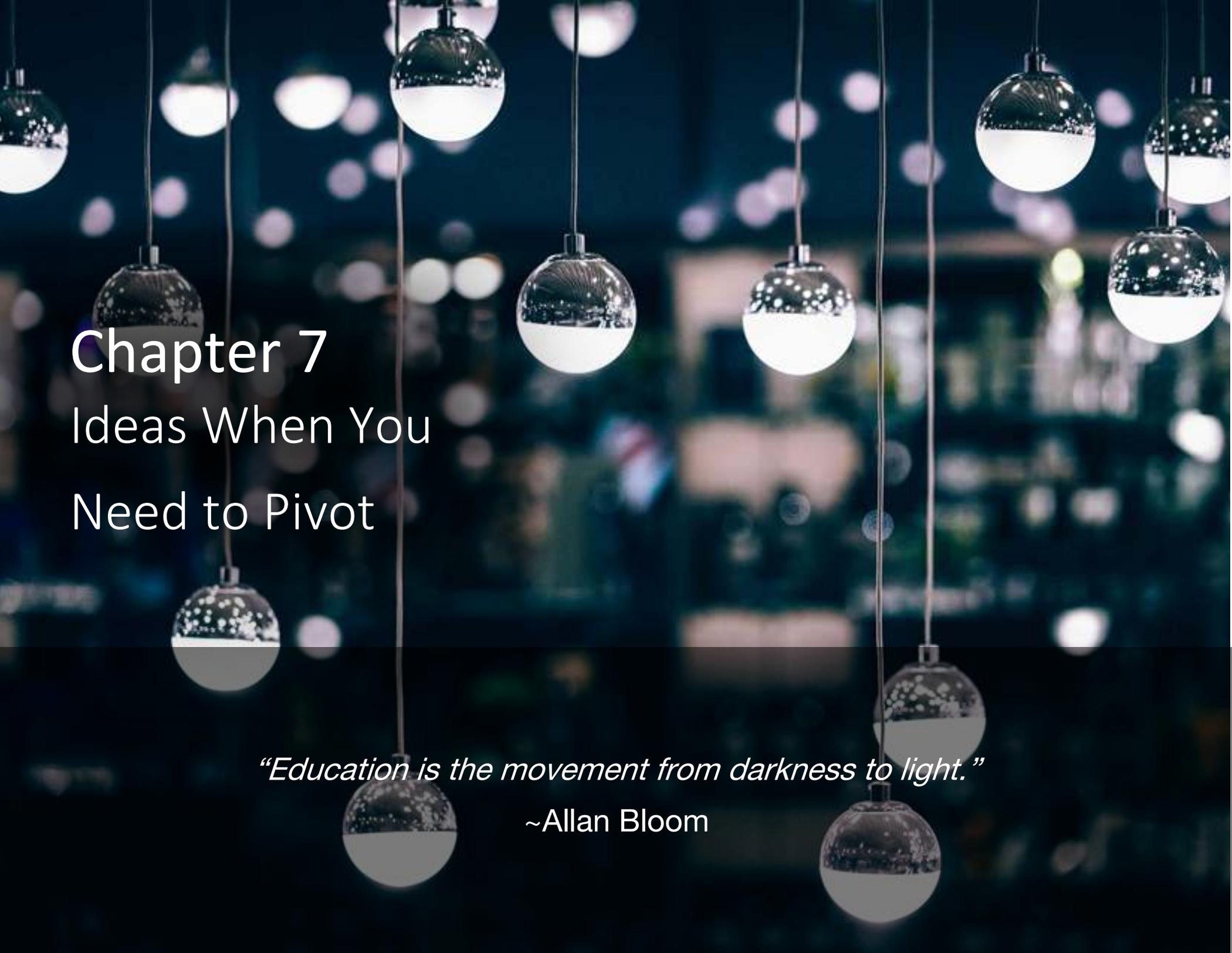
While this process seems straightforward, the anxiety while waiting can be a challenge. Make sure to apply to a few colleges and stay well organized with details for each school in a respective folder for quick reference.

Based on the decisions from the admissions office, you may need to alter your plans and consider other schools or earn additional credits to successfully gain admission to the school of your choosing. It may also be necessary to consider student loans to make things properly come together. When doing so, make sure to consult your family and counselors to ensure you understand the costs and timeline to begin paying back the loans. There are dozens of student loan portals but start with the US Department of Education's Federal Student Aid website to get a great basis for what is available.



## College Financial Aid Options:

- ✓ Grants
- ✓ Scholarships
- ✓ Work-Study
- ✓ Loans



# Chapter 7

## Ideas When You Need to Pivot

*“Education is the movement from darkness to light.”*

~Allan Bloom

Regardless how well you plan or how great your grades may be, it is possible your first choice of colleges may not reciprocate by granting admission. It is best to prepare for this possibility in advance than to find yourself scrambling at the last moment. This chapter will help you do just that before you are faced with another decision point.

The **acceptance** letter can either be accepted or turned down on your part. Be prepared to make either decision for each application based on the priority you have placed on a specific school and hierarchy of priorities placed on admission to that specific institution.

In terms of the **rejection** letter, be prepared to not achieve all stretch goals and pivot from the situation in a positive way. It is possible the applicant pool was exceptional or your sights were too high given your grades or myriad other reasons. Stop by and see your counselor to see if they have any insights on the rejection letter. As an alternative, your counselor will also have the NACAC's list of schools that have openings, housing, and financial aid still available which is published after May 1<sup>st</sup>. It is possible to accept admissions to your top school under a probationary status to prove yourself or a spring start instead of fall. If these options are viable, it may be a great segue to get into your dream college.

If you receive a **wait-list** letter from a college or university, there is a possibility of still being granted admission. **Why do schools wait-list students?** Simply put, colleges use a waiting list as a form of insurance. They know they only have so much capacity for incoming freshman and extend formal offers to a certain number of students. **How does a wait-list work?** If an applicant decides not to move forward after being notified of admission, the college will reach out to those on the waiting list to see if they are interested in moving forward. It is possible the admissions office will not have information for wait list candidates until mid-summer so it is incumbent on you to move towards alternate decisions. **Are all wait lists the same school to school?** The way waiting lists are constructed and managed will vary by school making it important to contact the admission department at the college to understand the mechanics of their waiting list. Some colleges provide wait-list statistics on the letter itself while others will require a call to get a better idea of what it means to you.



*"A college or university will basically provide you three responses to your application: **acceptance, rejection, or wait-list.**"*

One last effort may make a difference for those receiving a wait-list letter or rejection letter. More specifically, if your grades improved or if you won a major award it may behoove you to illuminate those accomplishments as an add-on to your application. It may just be the extra information needed to move the needle and work towards a much-desired acceptance letter. If you have yet to hear from your top choice by May 1<sup>st</sup> after reaching out to their admissions office, it would be a good choice to move to your next best college option. Waiting beyond this timeframe may unnecessarily put your other acceptance letters in jeopardy.

**Community Colleges** and **two-year colleges** can be a great option as all qualified applicants are accepted. It is likely that by thriving at a community college you gain entrance to your primary choice of college or university. Community colleges have robust programs and can be a solid foundation for your vocational aspirations, it will take a more personalized approach to your education with lower student to teacher ratios plus extra vocational counseling. Many community colleges have superb student resources and honors programs for those that qualify. Additionally, community colleges tend to be less expensive giving you the opportunity to save while speeding along your educational track before transferring to a college or university to complete your degree.

A **for-profit college** is an institution that is constructed and often controlled by private investors or stockholders. Not all for-profit universities are created equally so do your homework and research the college before applying to the school. Be diligent about visiting the campus and asking tough questions in order to determine a good fit for you given your goals and aspirations.

The last piece we would like to cover is **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)** which are effectively classes you can take online. Universities such as MIT, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford have made some course work available to anyone interested. While the completion of a series of MOOC classes will not lead to a university conferring a degree, valuable skills can be attained through the process that may lead to a college degree.

*"If you are not accepted into your first choice of colleges you want to consider **community college, a two-year college, for-profit university, or massive open online courses (MOOC)** to keep moving forward."*



# Chapter 8

## Successfully Transferring Schools

*“Education is not filling a pail but the lighting of a fire.”*

~William Butler Yeats

If transferring schools is in the offing for you, please read the following sections carefully to help with a smooth transition from one higher education institution to another.

As with any other life change, plan early and perform your due diligence prior to making a formal decision when transferring schools. In fact, a successful transfer starts during the first few months of school by thinking strategically about your future. Mapping out very specifically what you need to do in order to take the next step in your academic path will make all other facets of the process much easier. Make sure to review your college transcripts when strategically planning out your college transfer making sure you know where you stand and what is needed to be accepted into the next school. Pay close attention to any application deadlines and make sure to research financial aid options. All these factors play a vital role in setting yourself up for a positive experience and successful transfer.

**Articulation Agreements.** Check with your school counselor to see if they have an articulation agreement with other four-year institutions to accept credits for transfer students. Plan out your course work and educational trajectory with the knowledge that your current classes will be counted towards the degree of your choice at the school you desire down the line.

**Stay Focused.** By being organized and focused on your studies, the grades will follow. Having good grades and a plan for future course work, the transfer process is paces along the path to success already. If you need extra assistance with a particular class or improving study habits, make the effort to visit with your professors or link up with a tutor.

**Building Your Resume.** You can build a successful resume through grades, on-campus/off-campus work, volunteering, and through diligence with your studies. Each valuable use of time helps your professors better understand you as a person making the request for a letter of recommendation an easy ask, especially leading up to a school transfer.

## 3 Types of College Transfers:

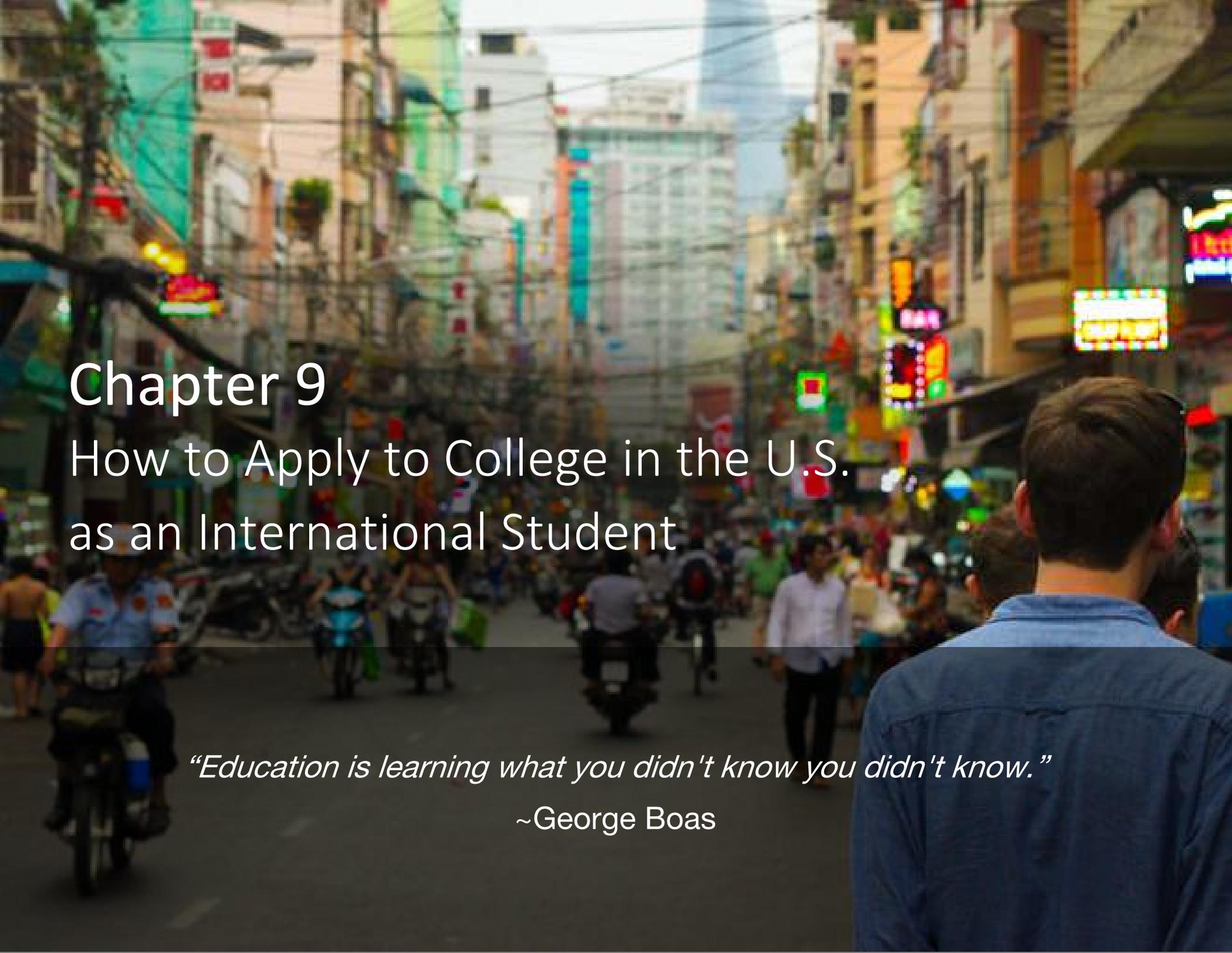
**Reverse transfer** - from a four-year institution to a two-year institution.

**Lateral transfer** - a transfer whereby the terms match — as in a two-year to two-year college transfer or a four-year to four-year transfer.

### **Vertical transfer**

*(2/4, traditional, or forward transfer)*

- from a two-year institution to a four-year institution.



## Chapter 9

# How to Apply to College in the U.S. as an International Student

*“Education is learning what you didn't know you didn't know.”*

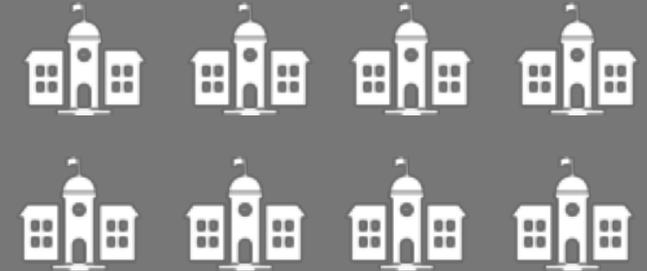
~George Boas

For international students looking to study in the United States, it may be comforting to know that thousands of international students both apply and are accepted to US colleges and universities every year. This section will help you best navigate the process if you maintain citizenship outside of the US and are interested in earning admission from a US-based college or university.

**United States Colleges and Universities.** It may come as a surprise to many to learn that the United States does not have a unified, national higher education system. That being the case, it is paramount to research each school to learn about their admission process and respective deadlines. A quick way to learn a significant amount of information without leaving your computer is to visit [MatchCollege](#). A treasure trove of information is available to help you narrow down your college search without visiting or calling each institution. Once you have a short list of colleges to work with, reach out to their international recruitment office to gather additional information from the school.

**Communication.** The admissions team at colleges and universities do their best to understand your ability to communicate in English. A number of higher education institutions will require an English proficiency exam that includes your ability to process, read, write, and speak the English language. The two most common exams are the [International English Language Testing System](#) (IELTS) and [the Test of English as a Foreign Language](#) (TOEFL) which are valid for a two years after completion of the exam. Each respective school on your list should provide the scoring criteria necessary for admission on either aforementioned test.

**Your Financial Plan.** As an international student, it will be necessary to get your arms around the various piece-parts of your higher education expenses. You need to calculate the cost of travel, living expenses, materials, and transportation in addition to the tuition for the school. Each university will provide you with an estimated cost of attendance to be used as a template for expected costs associated with school but is far from a universal or definitive number.



*“There are nearly 8,000 accredited, degree-granting higher education institutions in the United States.”*

We encourage international students to research scholarships, grants, work-study programs, and fellowships early in the process prior to asking the school about financial aid options. It is worth noting that most financial aid programs are designed for the benefit US residents; however, a specific school may have need-based or merit-based aid for qualified candidates. If the school does not have options for financial aid for international students, you can utilize the following sources to help secure financial aid:

[NAFSA](#): Is an international association of educators that have compiled a large repository of resources that may help your search and college transition process.

[EducationUSA](#)

[Institute of International Education](#)

**Obtaining Your Student Visa.** In order to lawfully enter the United States and study at a higher education institution, you must obtain a student visa. The two most common types of visas issued for prospective students are the F-1 and J-1. An F-1 visa is for a student that has been granted admission to an English language program or academic program while the J-1 is geared towards short-term exchange programs.

If a F-1 visa is the best fit for your needs, you will need your university or college to send an Immigration Form I-20 to certify you have been accepted into their program and demonstrated the financial wherewithal to remain in the US. It is most common to apply for the student visa at the embassy or consulate nearest to your residence. Also important to note, you should be prepared participate in a face-to-face interview after completing the visa application. We recommend utilizing the college admissions office, school-based counselors, or government-sponsored agents to help you navigate this process when possible.



## As an International Student you must:

- ✓ Obtain a student visa
- ✓ Provide a detailed plan on how to **finance** your education
- ✓ Objectively assess your ability to **communicate** in English.



# Chapter 10

## Additional Resources

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

~Nelson Mandela

### **High School Freshman**

[When Should I Start Planning for College?](#)

[The 8.5 Most Common Pitfalls of High School Freshman](#)

[High School Freshman College Checklist](#)

### **High School Sophomore**

[High School Sophomore Year College Prep Tools](#)

[High School Sophomore College Checklist](#)

### **High School Junior**

[High School Junior Year Planning Resources](#)

[High School Junior College Checklist](#)

### **High School Senior**

[The 7 Most Common Mistakes of High School Seniors](#)

[High School Senior College Checklist](#)

### **Adult Learner**

[How to Prepare for College after Losing a Job?](#)

[Life Transition: Changing Careers and College Planning](#)

[Going Back to College to Learn New Skills or a New Trade](#)

### **Life, Stress, and Managing Your College Life**

[How to Manage Stress During College](#)

[Developing Great Time Management Skills](#)

[Creating a Budget in College](#)

### **Additional Resources for Students with Special Needs**

[College for Visually Impaired Students](#)

[Students with Disabilities](#)

[How to prepare for the TOEFL for non-English Speaking Students?](#)

[What Options are Available for Homeschooled Students?](#)

[College Resources for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan?](#)

For additional resources,  
make sure to visit  
**MatchCollege** and  
subscribe to our **blog** for  
the latest in college  
information.