

GUIDE TO

College Counseling



Oakland Catholic
High School

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School Information

Location

Oakland Catholic High School
College Counseling Office
144 North Craig Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**School Code, College Entrance Examination
Board (CEEB) Code:** 393775

College Counseling Office

Phone: 412.682.6631
Fax: 412.682.1056
Email: counseling@oaklandcatholic.org

**Mrs. Ann Snyder,
Director of College Counseling**

Phone: 412.682.6633 x236
Email: asnyder@oaklandcatholic.org

**Mrs. Katie Gray, M.ED.,
College Counselor**

Phone: 412.682.6633 x237
Email: kgray@oaklandcatholic.org



SECTION 1:

College Counseling Philosophy

There are a number of different perspectives when it comes to choosing a college, preparing an application, and walking through the admission process. In fact, application evaluation practices and admission processes vary widely institution to institution, and can even change year to year. There are also a number of factors that are out of the control of the applicant, such as the number of applicants who apply to a specific college in a given year and admission decisions that are influenced by ever-changing institutional goals.

The Oakland Catholic College Counseling staff believes that each student's college search and application process is a unique and personal experience. We believe that the ultimate goal should be to find the right "fit" academically, socially, spiritually, and financially.

The college search and application process is also an educational experience. By engaging in the process, students will learn the skills of thinking, writing, research, and organization. Each young woman will learn to reflect, discern, and evaluate herself as she develops her own process.

The first step is for each student to consider academic, athletic, and social interests as well as her spiritual values to help identify a set of colleges which align with her interests and principles. The second step is to research the academic profile (i.e. median test score ranges, recommended classes, GPA, and acceptance rate) of each college and evaluate whether or not this college is a reasonable choice in light of her academic standing.

We categorize schools into three groups: Target, Reach, and Likely. Some schools will have an academic profile that is on par with the student's academic background (we refer to these as "target" schools). Some schools may have an academic profile that reflects test scores, recommended courses, or a GPA that are slightly above a student's academic profile, or may be on par with a student's academic profile, but has a low acceptance rate—we refer to these schools as "reach" schools. With the third category of schools, the student's academic profile is at the top of or above the school's academic profile, and therefore, it is likely that the student will be admitted to the school—we refer to these schools as "likely" schools. The initial college list should be balanced with schools from each category.

Once a student establishes a balanced college list, she is now ready to organize her application strategy. Strategy includes how and when to apply, standardized testing (or applying to test-optional colleges), letters of recommendation, the personal statement and supplemental essays, demonstrated interest, and in some cases, interviewing.

Individual Meetings

Individual scheduled college counseling meetings begin in January of junior year and are offered throughout the spring of junior year, the summer leading into senior year, and the fall of senior year. The fall is reserved exclusively for meetings with seniors, as application deadlines are imminent. It is strongly recommended that a student meets with the college counselor at least once prior to her senior year. This will allow for plenty of time to prepare and strategize for the fall application season. Upon the initial individual college counseling meeting, a student is required to complete an individual meeting form (see Appendix A).

The purpose of individual college counseling meetings is for the student to be able to reflect on her dreams and goals, and to begin to explore environments where she will thrive academically, socially, and spiritually.

The student and college counselor will brainstorm and research colleges together to identify a list of schools that could be a potential fit based on many factors such as academics, culture, location, and financial affordability. The list will be balanced to include reach schools, target schools, and likely schools. Finally, after a list is established, the college counselor will help advise the student on developing an application strategy and organizing a plan for admission. The student can continue to meet with the college counselor throughout the year to adjust and update her college plan.

Application Deadlines

Most college applications open in August prior to the senior year of high school. Some colleges open applications earlier. Regardless of when the application opens, it is important to note that according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), October 15th is the earliest application deadline that can exist for an institution.

Students are discouraged from applying prior to August of senior year, as many of their summer accomplishments and anticipated senior year involvements are omitted from the application.

Students are responsible for completing and submitting their applications by the stated deadlines. The College Counseling Department will work with students and families to guide them through choosing an application type and deadline that best meets their needs.

There are multiple types of deadlines that can play into the application strategy. These deadlines are outlined below:

Early Action (EA)

- Entails an early application deadline (usually mid-October to December).
- Admission decisions are released early (mid-December to mid-January).
- Non-binding. A student is not bound to enroll if admitted. In most cases, students can apply to multiple schools EA.
- EA can sometimes offer a favorable position in the applicant pool. The application is in the first batch of applications read by an admission committee. Some schools restrict the number of EA admits they allow in order to leave room for the Regular Decision applicant pool.
- Applying EA ensures that all institutional scholarship deadlines are met (i.e. a university may not offer scholarships to students who apply after a particular date, no matter how strong the student may be).

ELON UNIVERSITY

The students at Oakland Catholic do a wonderful job of advocating for themselves through the admission process—whether it be for general admission, scholarships, or other opportunities. This skill will serve them well throughout their collegiate experience and into their professional careers. Self-advocacy takes a certain level of maturity that is rare among high school students, but recurrent in the students I work with from Oakland Catholic.

—Ginny Oberle, *Elon University, Office of Admissions*

Restricted Early Action(REA)/Single Choice Early Action

- Entails an early application deadline (usually mid-October to December).
- Admission decisions are released early (mid-December to mid-January).
- Restricted or Single Choice Early Action restricts the students to only apply to one school Early Action. Additionally, the student is not permitted to apply Early Decision to any schools. The student may only apply Regular Decision or Rolling to other schools.
- Non-binding. A student is not bound to enroll if admitted.
- This is a rare form of Early Action—many of the Ivy league schools utilize Restricted or Single Choice Early Action. It will be clearly stated on the admission website.
- In most cases Restricted or Single Choice Early Action can offer a favorable position in the applicant pool (assuming all other metrics are met in the application).

Early Decision

- Entails an early application deadline (usually mid-October to December).
- Admission decisions are released early (usually mid-December).
- Binding—if a student is admitted to a college via Early Decision, they are bound to enroll at that college (unless finances will not allow).
- For students who “know that they know” where they want to enroll.
- A student can only apply Early Decision to one school. However, she is permitted to apply Early Action, Regular Decision, or Rolling to other schools.
- Often used in athletic recruitment. Can offer a favorable spot in the application pool (often weighted more favorably than Early Action).
- Upon receiving an ED admit decision, students are required to withdraw all other applications.

Regular Decision (RD)

- Regular application timeline. Dates are outlined on the school’s admission website.
- January 1 is the most common RD application deadline, however, there are many RD deadlines following January 1.
- Conservatories, performing arts majors or visual arts majors may have an earlier deadline due to required auditions or portfolio reviews (i.e. December 1).
- Some honors programs (such as Schreyer Honors at Penn State) have an earlier deadline.
- Regular decision is non-binding and there are no restrictions on applying elsewhere.
- Applications are read by admission committees after decisions have been made for ED, ED II, and EA/REA.
- Be aware of any institutional scholarship deadlines that a school may have. Students may need to submit applications by the scholarship deadline to be considered for aid. Institutional scholarship deadlines will be listed on the school’s admission or the financial aid webpage.

Rolling Admission

- No application deadlines listed.
- Completed applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Applying earlier in the year can be favorable (this is especially true for competitive programs such as engineering and nursing).
- Admission committees review applications and release a decision within a few weeks of receiving the application. If a decision has not been released within a few weeks of receiving a completed application, the school may be waiting for improved test scores, first quarter grades, or trying to get a better idea of the applicant pool.
- Similar to Regular Decision, be aware of any institutional scholarship deadlines.

Application Types

Many colleges offer students a choice in how to apply. The three application types are the Common Application, the Coalition Application, and Direct (students apply directly through the college's website). No favor is given to one application over the other. The Common Application and the Coalition Application require a significant investment of time to complete, however, once the core application is complete, the student can choose to send the application to multiple schools. The only additional work is the potential completion of a college supplement and/or additional college-specific essays.

The Common Application partners with over 800 colleges in the world. Due to the far reach, Oakland Catholic High School offers a College Application Boot Camp to seniors during the summer leading into their senior year. During this three-day boot camp, the students will receive step-by-step instructions on how to complete the Common Application with accuracy and strategy. Students will graduate from boot camp having completed a polished college application prior to entering into their senior year. The last day of boot camp is a dedicated essay workshop, where students will work on their personal statements (essays). The personal statement is not expected to be completed by the conclusion of the boot camp. It is strongly recommended that seniors attend one of the College Application Boot Camps offered during the summer leading into senior year.

The Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR) is a required application component for many of the large universities (including Penn State University and the University of Pittsburgh). In lieu of sending a transcript, these colleges require that the applicant translates her transcript onto the application using the SRAR. Students are to translate their classes exactly as they appear on the transcript (abbreviations and all). Students will need their Oakland Catholic transcript along with their transfer transcript (if applicable) in order to complete the SRAR. If a student is admitted and chooses to enroll at a school which utilized the SRAR, a final official transcript will be required at the conclusion of senior year. Accuracies will be assessed at that time.



“Oakland Catholic students are well prepared in the application process with great support from the College Counseling Office. The admissions process to the University of Michigan is extensive, though Ms. Snyder has provided the context to review each student well.”

—Amanda Blanchette, University of Michigan, Office of Undergraduate Admission

Standardized Testing

Most colleges require students to take either the SAT or ACT in order to complete their college application. Some schools are switching to a “test-optional” policy, which allows students to apply for admission without sending an SAT or ACT score. The SAT and ACT are viewed as equal assessments, and no preference is given to one exam over the other.

SAT and ACT Preparation

At Oakland Catholic, we advise that each student takes a free proctored practice SAT, free proctored ACT, or both. There are multiple benefits of taking a free proctored practice exam: it gives a student a baseline score without having a record of taking the test, it helps the student determine which test is best for her, and it helps reduce test anxiety by providing a simulation to test day. The environment and experience of a proctored practice exam will be very similar to the environment when taking the actual test.

Free proctored practice exams are offered at Oakland Catholic throughout the year. In the fall, a free proctored SAT and ACT are offered on two separate Saturdays. In the winter, a free proctored SAT and ACT are offered on two separate Saturdays.

Regardless of whether or not a student has taken a proctored practice exam, it is advised that each student attempts both the SAT and the ACT to determine which test is a better fit for her testing style. Students usually test better on one exam over the other. Once a preferred exam is identified, the student can retake that particular exam or pursue test prep for that particular exam. It is discouraged to continue to take both the SAT and the ACT repeatedly.

By the time students conclude their junior year, they should have taken at least one standardized exam.

Some colleges require that the optional writing section be taken. The admission website will be clear if this is a requirement. Most schools do not require the optional writing section.

SAT Subject Tests

There are a few highly selective schools which require the SAT II Subject Exams in addition to the SAT or ACT. The admission website will clearly outline this in the testing policy section. Some schools will specify which subject tests are required, while others give the students the option. The College Board website provides a schedule of test dates (i.e. some language tests are only offered during the summer months).

It is advised that the SAT II Subject Tests are taken at the conclusion of a high-level course in that subject area. If a student just completed AP Biology, the SAT II Subject Test should be taken then. Some SAT II Subject tests go beyond the material taught in class. If this is the case, students may have to self-study some of the covered topics before taking the exam. SAT II Subject Tests are offered through the College Board.

AP Exams

Many colleges will award credit for AP exam scores of 3, 4, or 5, however AP scores are not often evaluated in the admission process. If a student has earned a 4 or 5 on an exam, it can help to self-report the high scores, however, if a student has earned less than a 4, it is advised that the student refrains from self-reporting the score until admitted into the institution.

Super-scoring

Super-scoring is when a college accepts the best section score of each SAT or ACT. With the SAT, the school will consider the best Evidenced Based Reading and Writing score along with the best Math score to derive the highest possible total score. Some schools will super-score the ACT, taking the highest Math, English, Reading, Science, and Composite score. Super-scoring policies vary from school to school, so it is important to read how they super-score. Some schools will super-score the SAT and not the ACT.

Test-Optional Policy

Increasing numbers of colleges are switching to a test-optional policy. Students can apply without submitting test scores. There are a few considerations when applying test-optional. Does the college require an additional essay, graded paper, or supplement to be submitted in lieu of the test scores? Does the college have a GPA minimum to apply test-optional? If a student decides to apply test-optional, she should be aware that more emphasis will be placed on the transcript. If a student has any holes in her transcript, test scores should be sent.

Additionally, if a student's test scores are within or above the published median 50% test score range for a particular college, she should send her scores to the college. The published test score ranges for test-optional colleges are often inflated, as the students who decide to send their scores tend to have higher scores. Test scores can help a student if she has had average to below-average high school performance.

Considerations

If a student is applying Early Action or Early Decision to a school, it is important that she looks at their deadlines and testing policies. Some schools only accept scores taken up to a certain date (i.e. September or October of the application year). Please be aware of testing restrictions. Schools do not penalize students for re-taking an exam and scoring lower. Most schools only consider a student's best scores.

Students are responsible for sending their test scores to colleges through the College Board website or the ACT website. Oakland Catholic does not print test scores on the transcript, and is not responsible for sending test scores to institutions. Some colleges accept self-reported test scores from students, to be followed up with official scores if a student decides to enroll.

**SAT website: www.collegeboard.org
ACT website: www.act.org**

THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA



“If you are looking for a student that will bring leadership, ambition, and great work ethic to your campus, look no further than an Oakland Catholic student. Oakland Catholic is successful in their development of academically-driven students in the classroom and skilled leaders in the outside community.”

*–Rachel Badolato, The Catholic University of America,
Office of Undergraduate Admission*

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are often (not always) a required component to the college application. It is important to note that the admission requirements vary, ranging from schools who do not accept letters at all, to schools who limit recommendations to one letter, to schools who welcome multiple letters. Typically, colleges will require two teacher recommendation letters. There are a few types of recommendation letters: a teacher recommendation letter, a counselor recommendation letter/written evaluation, or a supplemental recommendation letter.

Requesting a Teacher Recommendation

Teacher letters are most effective when the teacher knows the student well and is able to share specific observations and examples in the letter. It is recommended that the letter is a fairly recent reflection of the student's ability. Therefore, it is discouraged to ask a teacher from freshman year unless the student will have that same teacher again senior year.

Considerations when choosing teachers:

- The most important consideration is choosing a teacher who knows the student well. This teacher should be able to comment on the student's academic abilities, character, and behavior.
- Secondary considerations include the academic subject (i.e. if a student is applying to a selective STEM major, it is recommended that she chooses one teacher who has taught her in a STEM-related subject).
- It is best practice to reach out to two teachers prior to the conclusion of junior year to ask for a letter of recommendation. This allows the teacher plenty of time to write a thoughtful, detailed letter.
- It is advised that students approach each teacher in person (face to face) to ask if he or she would be willing to write the letter.
- Once a teacher agrees to write the letter, the student must promptly submit a completed Teacher Recommendation Form and/or résumé to the recommender (see Appendix B and Appendix C).
- The minimum amount of time a student should provide her recommender when requesting a letter is 30 days. If a student requests a last-minute letter, she is not guaranteed that the letter will be written earlier than 30 days from the date the recommendation form and/or résumé are submitted to the recommender.
- Once the proper documents have been given to the teacher, the student should electronically request the teacher recommendation in Naviance.
- Teachers have until mid-October to upload letters. It is the student's responsibility to communicate early deadlines to her teachers. Although college applications may open early, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) policy states that colleges cannot require application submission prior to October 15.

KATE BRENNAN, OCHS'19
will be studying Chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh



Requesting a Counselor Recommendation

Colleges may also require a counselor recommendation or “written evaluation.” The admission website of each school will clearly state the application requirements. If a counselor letter is recommended, the student must complete the counselor recommendation form (see Appendix D) and submit it to the college counseling department. It is required that this form be submitted one-month prior to the application deadline.

Requesting a Supplemental Recommendation

A student can request a supplemental recommendation if she feels that this recommender will add an additional perspective to her application. This perspective should not be redundant of the teacher letters. Examples of a supplemental recommender are an athletic coach, a supervisor at a job or internship, or a spiritual reference such as a priest, pastor, or mentor.

The student is responsible for supplying the supplemental recommender with a list of the colleges and email addresses so that the recommender can send the letter directly to the institution. These letters cannot be uploaded or sent via Naviance, and should be sent directly by the recommender.

Considerations:

- More is not necessarily better. Following the instructed guidelines is what is most important. Many colleges are required to read every document received on the student’s behalf. If an admission counselor who only has a limited time to evaluate an application is reading multiple redundant letters, it may take away from the application components. Be discerning and conservative with your recommendation submissions.
- Letters are used as an opportunity to advocate for a student. If letters are not required, but there is an outlying circumstance that would help the admission committee understand a student’s context, a letter should be submitted on the student’s behalf.



I am continuously impressed with the OC students I meet, in ways that go far beyond their academic credentials, which are undoubtedly strong! In admissions, when we talk about “fit,” we are often looking at things that go beyond what a transcript can tell us, sometimes intangibles. And OC students have such an impressive handle on what those intangibles can mean for them—and a campus community.

The environment at OC helps students cultivate a strong sense of self, characteristics of leadership and cooperation, and deep thinking about their place in the world and how they can make it better. These are such valuable qualities and the ability to articulate them is even more valuable. I jump at the chance to speak with / interview students here—they always have something to share and teach me!

—Sarah Gerin, University of Rochester Office of Admissions

Demonstrated Interest

Demonstrated interest is when a student takes action to “demonstrate” her interest in a particular school. Demonstrated interest can be influential in the admission process, depending on the school. Some colleges encourage and welcome students to demonstrate their interest, while others make it clear that demonstrating interest does not have weight on the admission decision.

Regardless of whether or not a college considers demonstrated interest in the application review, most colleges are looking for students who are a good fit. Ultimately, both demonstrated interest and fit will reveal itself in the supplemental section of applications. The supplemental section of an application often includes additional essays or short-answer questions that are designed to investigate fit.

Demonstrated interest can vary in how it is “demonstrated.” Listed below are a number of ways a student can demonstrate their interest in a college:

- Attend a college visit/meet with the admission representative at her high school.
- Attend an information session locally or on campus.
- Interview with an admission representative or alumni interviewer locally or on campus.
- Connect with an admission representative at a college fair.
- Visit and tour campus, or take a virtual tour of campus.
- Reach out to the admission representative via email to ask questions, share updates, or reaffirm her interest in the college.
- Present a polished application so that it is clear that a lot of thought and care was invested in the application.
- Complete optional additional essay prompts or short-answer questions.
- Do research (whether it be online research or a visit to campus). Provide a strong and detailed response to the “why us” essay, which reflects her knowledge of the school and demonstrates overall fit.

Students do not have to visit campus to demonstrate their interest. Researching a school and developing an understanding of the academic and social environment, unique opportunities and programs, and culture is a great way to demonstrate interest. Developing a comprehensive understanding of admission requirements and thoroughly fulfilling them is another way to demonstrate interest.

It is encouraged that students join the prospective student mailing list by completing an inquiry form on the college’s admission website. This way, students are kept up-to-date on upcoming deadlines, events, and opportunities to connect with the university. Be vigilant for when colleges are visiting Pittsburgh. Often, there are opportunities to attend an information session, interview, or connect with an admission representative in Pittsburgh. Additionally, admission representatives visit Oakland Catholic to meet with students. On average, one hundred colleges visit Oakland Catholic each year.

HANNAH SCHUPANSKY, OCHS’19
will be studying Neuroscience at Yale University



If a student is deferred admission in the early action/early decision process, it is especially important that she continues to demonstrate her interest by reaching out to the admission representative with updates, thereby reaffirming her interest in the institution.

Interviewing

College interviews are often offered as a part of the application. The interview process varies at each institution and, therefore, it is important to visit the college's admission website or to call the admission office to find out what is offered. Some schools allow students to interview as a junior, others require that a student submit an application prior to interviewing, while others are by invitation only. Many schools do not offer interviews at all. Interviews can be offered both locally (in your own city) and on campus. The interviewer may be an admission professional or a trained alumni interviewer.

It is important to research if an interview is recommended, required, or simply informational. If an interview is recommended, it is strongly advised that the student interviews in order to demonstrate her interest in the school and strengthen her application.

Interview Tips to Students

- Bring a résumé (see Appendix B) and a journal. A journal is great for note taking.
- Plan ahead and make sure you have plenty of time to travel to the interview location. Plan where you will park and arrive early.
- Be yourself! There is only one you on this planet, and that makes you unique. Not only do schools want to know if you are a strong academic fit, they also want to know that you will be a good roommate and citizen of the campus.
- Do your research. It is advised for each college that the student has a strong concrete answer for why she is interested in a college. Students are encouraged to list the specifics that make each institution a standout. Whether it be academic programs, location, campus, student life, research opportunities, or study abroad opportunities, it is good to know the college culture and opportunities offered.
- Prepare two to three questions. Questions can be about the school, majors, admission process, student life, etc. If all questions have been answered during the interview, consider asking the interviewer what his/her most valuable experience has been while attending or working at the institution. What does he/she think is one of its greatest strengths? Greatest challenges? What advice would he/she give to an incoming freshman?
- Dress appropriately. While students may not need to wear a full suit or blazer, it is important to dress professionally or slightly more formal than what one would normally wear out to a nice dinner. A polished look will help contribute to a positive first impression. If interviewing after school, a school uniform is perfectly acceptable to wear. The interview outfit should not distract from the interview itself.
- Eye contact is important! Whether answering a question, or listening to the interviewer, make eye contact. It shows that you are confident, engaged, and interested in the conversation.
- Show enthusiasm and smile. This goes a long way.
- Offer a firm, confident handshake to start and/or finish the interview.
- Obtain the interviewer's business card. Follow up with a thank you card or email. Keep contact information for future communication.

The Personal Statement

Many applications recommend or require a personal statement as a component to the application. Although the personal statement can be time intensive, it is well worth the investment. Remember that the application is the only way to allow for an admission committee to know an applicant. This is the place for a student to advocate for herself. How does the application reflect the student's personality, story, and journey? If given the opportunity to share a personal statement, it is always recommended. The personal statement gives the applicant a chance to have a voice. If the student interviews, she will likely only interview with one admission counselor; the personal statement allows for the entire admission committee to hear her voice.

Important things to note about the personal statement:

- Recount and reflect. A great question to ask yourself as you share about an inspiration, experience, object, or passion, is "so what?" Why is this significant to me? Consider both the significance of the topic as well as your personal thought process and reflections.
- Give yourself plenty of time and write a few different drafts. It will serve you well to set your essay draft aside for a couple of days before returning to it.
- Don't try to summarize your entire life or high school career in this essay. Choose an experience, object, or moment in time that will help the reader get to know you better.
- This is not the place to summarize your activities or transcript. You may elaborate on an activity, academic interest, or passion—but do so in a way that is compelling. Don't just re-state your résumé.
- Have a friend, family member, or teacher proofread. Visit the writing center. Limit the number of editors so that your voice is not lost in the process.
- Be direct, write clearly, and use specific and concrete examples. Help the reader experience what you are writing about. Use dialog when appropriate. Tell a good (true) story.
- Make it personal. Don't be afraid to show vulnerability. Be natural. Be you.

Supplemental Essays

Many colleges recommend that students complete supplemental questions and essays. Although an application may indicate that this portion of the application is "optional," it should never be treated as optional, no matter how strong an applicant may be. Admission committees will often meticulously review the supplemental responses to gauge demonstrated interest, knowledge of the college, invested effort, and overall fit.

It is also important to address the "why us" essay. Some colleges will ask students to articulate why they chose that particular college or a particular major. Colleges are looking for a thoughtful, well-researched answer that goes deep. Answers that simply restate information stated on the landing page of the school website or college ranking websites just scratch the surface. It is important for the applicant to demonstrate that she has an understanding of the school, opportunities, and culture. The applicant should be able to articulate her fit for the college or program. This essay has the potential to help a student's application stand out from other applicants with similar credentials.

College Visits

One of the best ways to discover college “fit” is to visit a college campus. A campus visit will allow students to tour, view the facilities, and get a feel for the size and overall atmosphere. It is highly recommended that students ask questions and have conversations with the tour guide(s). If possible, ask the admission office if it is possible to tour a specific department to see the classrooms, labs, and potentially have the opportunity to meet with a faculty member.

If traveling out of town to visit a campus is not feasible, Western Pennsylvania offers a variety of colleges and universities located within two hours of Oakland Catholic High School. It is recommended that students visit neighboring schools to determine fit. Touring a campus can give perspective to size, atmosphere, and opportunity. Examples of local campuses include a large school with Division I athletics, a branch campus, an urban school, a faith-based school, a tech/engineering school, a highly selective school, a small liberal arts school, a Pennsylvania state system school, and a performing arts school.

Oakland Catholic students are granted two excused absences to visit a college campus during junior year, and three excused absences to visit a college campus during senior year. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of vacation time and long weekends to visit college campuses. College open houses, tours, information sessions, and admission events will be posted on the admission website. If the opportunity to interview presents itself, students are encouraged to take advantage of it. It will serve as a chance to practice interview skills and as an opportunity to learn more about the institution.

Colleges may offer overnight programs or fly-in programs to interested students. Often these programs are selective and require an application. Overnight programs can be extremely helpful in giving students an inside peak into campus life, culture, and day-to-day experience.

Opportunities to connect with colleges can also happen locally. On average, one hundred colleges visit Oakland Catholic High School each fall to meet with students throughout the school day. Students are encouraged to take time to meet with a college admission representative to get to know a school better. She may miss class in order to attend the college visit, however, she must ask for teacher permission ahead of time and make up all missed notes and assignments. Colleges also may travel to Pittsburgh for a college fair, regional information session, or to conduct local interviews.

Carnegie Mellon University

“The college admission “process” isn’t a process to be managed but a journey toward many great fit colleges that will help you realize your full potential. My first piece of advice is to not obsess over “The One” and instead create a list of colleges where you’d be equally happy to attend. It’s also important to remember that financial fit is just as important as everything else, so make sure you use Net Price Calculators and have open conversations about affordability so that you and your family are happy with the list you create before you make it.”

–David DeBor, Carnegie Mellon University, Office of Undergraduate Admission

Requesting a Transcript

An unofficial transcript can be requested at any time. It is common for college coaches to request an unofficial transcript when a student is going through the athletic recruitment process. Students may also need a copy of their unofficial transcript to complete a Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR). A student can request an unofficial transcript simply by emailing the counseling office.

Once a student begins submitting applications for admission, an official transcript must be requested. In order to ensure that no transcript is missed, students must follow the protocol, outlined below:

- 1** Submit the college application.
- 2** Enter the college into the "Colleges I'm Applying To" page on Naviance. The application types must be identified (Common App, or Direct; and Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, or Rolling).
- 3** Teacher recommendation letters must be uploaded to Naviance before a transcript can be requested (the transcript, school profile, and recommendation letters must be submitted by the counseling office to a school together). Teacher recommendation letter upload/submission status can be viewed on Naviance. The "in progress" or "submitted" status both indicate that the letter has been uploaded. If recommendation letters are not required or considered, you may skip this step.
- 4** Complete the transcript request form (TRF) for each college (see Appendix E). This paper form must be completed, even if the school has an electronic upload system. Upon receipt of a transcript request form, the college counseling office will process the request and send the transcript, school profile, and recommendation letters to the requested school.
- 5** Students must allow the counseling office an entire week to process transcript requests, especially during a high volume time (September through the end of October). Students are required to submit a transcript request at least one week prior to the application deadline.



University of
Pittsburgh

I have been with the Office of Admissions at the University of Pittsburgh for 23 years. We receive about 60 applications each year from Oakland Catholic students, and I have always found the girls to be well-prepared for their college search. During my visits to the school, they ask great questions about Pitt and the application process. Your counseling staff does a thorough job preparing them and communicating with me on the students' behalf. It is a pleasure to work with everyone associated with Oakland Catholic.

–Barry Duerr, University of Pittsburgh, Office of Admissions



SECTION 2 :

College Preparation Timeline

Junior Year	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Register for the PSAT.• Review results of sophomore testing.• Look into test taking strategies (Khan Academy).• Continue involvement in club activities, athletics, service, or work.• Aim for leadership positions in your activities, athletics, work, etc.• Meet with college representatives who are conducting high school visits or information sessions in the Pittsburgh area.• Take the free proctored SAT at OCHS.• Attend the Pennsylvania Association of Catholic College Admission Officers (PACCAO) college fair that takes place at OCHS.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the PSAT (offered at OCHS during the school day).• Discuss college plans with your family.• Attend the Financial Aid Information Night.• Take the free proctored ACT at OCHS.• Meet with college representatives who are conducting high school visits on campus or information sessions in the Pittsburgh area.
November/ December	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend the SAT/ACT information night at OCHS.• Familiarize yourself with the Naviance website. Naviance can be used to research schools and build your college list, among many other uses.• Research colleges by spending time on college websites:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Search for admission requirements (i.e. recommended courses, recommended tests, interviews).- View median data points of admitted/enrolled students (median SAT, ACT, GPA). Only gather this data directly from the college's website.- Application types and deadlines (Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, Rolling).- Are there special requirements for particular majors? (Music Theater, Engineering, Nursing, Physician Assistant...).- Take a virtual tour online if offered.• Consider the upcoming school breaks and how you could potentially take advantage of the time to visit colleges.• Begin considering test preparation resources such as test prep classes, tutoring, or the free Khan Academy resource (offered through the College Board).• Register for the December SAT in November.

Junior Year

<p>November/ December <i>Continued</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend college counseling presentations in class. • Begin to consider, research and apply for summer pre-college programs, internships, work, or enrichment activities.
<p>January/ February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review senior year courses and graduation requirements with your counselor. Considerations include course recommendations from teachers, intended major, and recommended courses posted on college admission websites. • Attend college counseling class presentations. Discussions will include the college search and how to begin building a college list. • Choose ten colleges to investigate over the spring semester. • Complete the college counseling questionnaire and schedule an initial appointment with the college counselor to discuss post-secondary goals. • Take the free proctored ACT or free proctored SAT at OCHS. • Register for the February ACT or the March SAT. • Attend the annual Pittsburgh National College Fair at the David L. Lawrence convention center. This takes place in February. • Begin visiting colleges: tour, attend information sessions, set up departmental visits if available. • Begin to consider, research and apply for summer pre-college programs, internships, summer work, or enrichment activities.
<p>March/April</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend college counseling class presentations. Discussions will include what matters in the admission process. • Register for the April ACT or May SAT. • Meet with the college counselor to discuss post-secondary goals. • Solidify summer plans: internship, pre-college, research, work, or enrichment activity.
<p>May/June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend college counseling class presentations. Discussions will include teacher recommendation letters and college strategy. • Identify two teachers who you would like to write your recommendation letters. Ask before the end of the school year. • June presents another opportunity to take the ACT or SAT. • June also presents an opportunity to take the SAT Subject Tests (if required by a college). Two SAT Subject Tests are administered on one test date. June is a great time to get a base line for these tests. If necessary, you may retake these subject tests in the fall to improve your score. It is best to take an SAT Subject Test at the conclusion of an advanced course in a particular subject.

Junior Year

May/June
Continued

- Meet with the college counselor to discuss college choices, build your college list, and discuss your strategy.
- Solidify summer plans: internship, pre-college, research work, or enrichment activity.

June/July/
August

- Visit colleges: tour, attend information sessions, and set up departmental visits if available.
 - Enlist family and friends, and visit the college campuses together. Talk to students who have attended the colleges on your list. Keep a notebook or excel chart and log the admission requirements (SAT/ACT and GPA ranges), deadlines, requirements, majors offered, financial aid offered, along with academic, social, athletic, and spiritual environment.
 - If traveling is not possible, Pittsburgh offers almost every type of college within a 150-mile radius (i.e. liberal arts colleges, state system schools, large flagship universities, private colleges, selective universities, faith-based schools, urban, rural, college town, and suburban). You can visit colleges in the region to give you a sense of the type of school you would like to attend, even if you ultimately prefer to attend college in another state.
- Interview where interviews are offered and recommended. Schedule a time with the college counselor to discuss résumé writing and interview strategies.
- Intern, work, or attend a pre-college program or engage in a summer enrichment activity.
- Explore SAT or ACT test preparation options in order to work towards a goal test score. This number will be dependent on your current PSAT or SAT/ACT score as well as where you want to apply.
- The ACT is offered in July, and the SAT is offered in August.
- Attend College Application Boot Camp to begin completing the Common Application. Learn how to construct a polished, accurate application.
- Meet with the college counselor to discuss college choices, continue to build your college list, and update your application strategy.



MARICARIN MINNOCK, OCHS'19
*will be studying Aeronautical Sciences at
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University*

Senior Year

September/ October

- Make an appointment with the college counselor to review your summer and to continue to develop your college list. Discuss the application process, your strategy, college essay, and next steps in college preparation.
- It is suggested that you narrow your list of schools to 5-10. Ensure that it's a balanced list.
- Complete your applications and be prepared to submit most applications by November 1, a common Priority/Early Action deadline. Many colleges ask that you apply early to qualify for scholarships.
- Be aware of early deadlines: specialty programs often have early deadlines. Some colleges also have early fall Early Action deadlines.
- Attend college counseling class presentations. Discussions will include using Naviance, the procedure for requesting transcripts, application deadlines, scholarship deadlines, building and balancing your college list, completing the FAFSA and CSS Profile, and finding a financial fit.
- Complete and submit the counselor letter recommendation form at least two weeks in advance of an application deadline.
- Transcript request forms must be submitted at least one week prior to the application deadline. It is assumed that the teacher recommendation and counselor recommendation forms had been submitted before transcripts are requested. All recommendation letters are required to be uploaded to Naviance prior to requesting transcripts. The Naviance "Colleges I'm Applying To" list must indicate the application type.
- Continue to prepare and take standardized tests.
- Work hard to strengthen your transcript by either maintaining good grades or improving your grades. Colleges will consider senior year grades.
- Continue involvement in club activities, athletics, service, or work, and aim for leadership positions where available.
- Complete the FAFSA, PHEAA application, and CSS Profile during the month of October.
- Meet with college representatives through their visits to OCHS, Pittsburgh information sessions, or hometown interviews.
- Attend the Financial Aid Information Night.

November/ December

- Most Early Action, Early Decision, and Priority Decision Deadlines take place in November. It is encouraged that all students apply to at least one college by an early deadline to best position themselves for favorable admission decisions and scholarships. **The Monday prior to winter break is the last day to submit transcript requests for the January 1 deadline (a common regular decision deadline).**
- Take any remaining SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests.
- Complete the FAFSA, PHEAA application, and CSS Profile.

Senior Year

<p>November/ December <i>Continued</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may begin to receive admission decisions. If you were admitted Early Decision to a school, enroll at that particular school by making a deposit and withdrawing all other applications. If you were deferred to Regular Decision, maintain contact with your admission representative to reaffirm your interest and to send any significant updates to your application. If you were deferred or denied to your first Early Decision choice, you may consider identifying a second choice college that offers Early Decision II.
<p>January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 1, January 15, and February 1 are popular Regular Decision or Early Decision II deadlines. Please be aware of these deadlines, and submit your transcript request forms at least two weeks prior to the deadline. Scholarship information is posted in Naviance throughout the year. Additionally, college-specific scholarship information is posted on each college's admission and financial aid website. Focus on maintaining good grades and keeping up with email communication to your admission contacts and your college counselor. If you were admitted Early Decision to a school, enroll at that particular school by making a deposit and withdrawing all other applications.
<p>February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request midyear grades to be sent to colleges if they are required. Check with your college counselor to see if there are further strategies you can employ at your first and second choice schools. Maintain contact with your admission contacts to affirm your interest in a particular school and to send any significant updates. Identify a financial aid contact at each of your colleges so that you can check on the status of your aid. If you were admitted Early Decision to a school, enroll at that particular school by making a deposit and withdrawing all other applications.
<p>March/April/ May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a file that includes all acceptance letters and financial aid award letters. Submit all scholarships and acceptances to the counseling office so that you may be recognized at the Honors Convocation ceremony. Record all decisions (this includes all acceptances, denials, deferrals, and waitlist decisions) on Naviance. Research the financial aid appeal process at each school (if applicable). You will need to present a competing financial aid/scholarship offer from a peer institution along with your appeal request. Meet with the college counselor to discuss your options, and to receive assistance in understanding your financial aid awards at each school. Take advantage of special admitted student events offered throughout March and April. If you have not yet visited, it is strongly encouraged to physically visit the college campus before you commit.

Senior Year

March/April/
May
Continued

- May 1 is the universal deadline to make your college decision. Be prepared to make a deposit to your college of choice to reserve your spot on campus no later than May 1. May 1 is also the deadline for applying for a Pennsylvania state grant through PHEAA.
- Pay attention to college-specific deadlines as it relates to housing, tuition, enrollment, etc.
- Complete the "graduation survey" on Naviance to officially report where you plan to attend college.

June/July

- Your college counselor will send all official final transcripts to the attending college, as indicated on Naviance. Final transcripts will not be available until June.
- If you are utilizing student loans in order to pay for college, complete Entrance Counseling and the Master Promissory Note on the Direct Loans website during the month of June.



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

“I enjoy working with Oakland Catholic students because I know that they will have a thorough understanding of the application process. When I meet with them, they have informed, relevant questions due to the excellent preparation they’ve received from Mrs. Snyder and the College Counseling Office at Oakland Catholic.”

–Dawn Walker, Michigan State University, Office of Admissions



SECTION 3: Appendices A-E

Appendix A: Counseling Notes for Individual Junior Meetings

Name: _____

Nickname: _____ Date: _____

Personal Landscape:

Family—Who is in your household? Include older siblings, even if they may not be living at your house:

Are there any special considerations or pressures that you are experiencing that may affect the college search and application process?

Experience at OC

Favorite Courses/Favorite Teachers: _____

Who knows you best? (Possible rec writers): _____

Strengths: _____

Areas for growth: _____

Activities/Athletics: _____

Standardized Tests

SAT or ACT Practice Test Scores/Dates or anticipated dates (month/year): _____

SAT Test Scores/Dates or anticipated dates (month/year): _____

SAT Subject Test Scores/Dates or anticipated dates (month/year): _____

ACT Test Scores/Dates or anticipated dates(month/year): _____

AP Tests Scores/Dates or anticipated dates(month/year): _____

Appendix A: Counseling Notes for Individual Junior Meetings *(continued)*

Course Planning:

Junior Year Courses:

Intended Senior Year Courses:

Initial Thoughts:

Academic interests: _____

Possible majors: _____

Possible career: _____

Campus setting: Urban Suburban Rural College town Does not matter

Geographic region:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mid-Atlantic (PA, NY, DE, NJ, DC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Midwest (OH, MI, IN, IL, WI, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New England (MA, CT, RI, NH, VT, ME) | <input type="checkbox"/> Southwest (CA, AZ, UT, CO, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast (VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, TX, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest (WA, OR, ID, MT, etc.) |

Ideal distance/driving radius from home (in hours): _____

Size:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small (less than 2,500) | <input type="checkbox"/> X-Large (15,000+) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (2,500-7,500) | <input type="checkbox"/> Does not matter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large (7,500-15,000) | |

Interest in participating in:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studio Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics—Sport: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | <input type="checkbox"/> Study Abroad | <input type="checkbox"/> Greek life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious/Cultural Organization(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Big time spectator sports |

Applying for financial aid?: Yes No Unsure

Other important factors:

Appendix A: Counseling Notes for Individual Junior Meetings *(continued)*

Visits to college campuses:

Initial List of Schools:

Suggested List of Schools:

Additional Comments (for Office Use Only)

First Gen: Yes No

Fee Waiver: Yes No Maybe

Special Considerations: _____

Test Prep: _____

Appendix B: Résumé Template

Student Name

Your Address Here • City, State Zip • email@emailaddress.com • phone number

Education

Your High School

City, State

GPA:

Class of YYYY

SAT Composite: score/1600 (M: score ERW: score)

ACT Composite: score /36 (E: score, M: score, R: score, S: score)

SAT II Subject Tests: Subject score, Subject score

Advanced Curriculum

AP Math

AP History/Social Science

Honors Science

AP Science

AP Class*

Honors Language

AP Language

Honors Math

Honors Social Science

*Courses relevant to intended major

Leadership and Activities

(In this category list leadership positions first, or unique experiences, followed by extracurricular activities and employment which don't involve a leadership position. In other words, highlight the most unique and involved experiences).

Organization (grades which participated)

Leadership position (grade level), Different leadership position (grade level)

Short description of the organization and the duties the leadership position performed. This should be written using action verbs in the past tense. Avoid writing in the first person.

Organization (grades which participated)

Short description of the organization. This should be written using action verbs in the past tense. Avoid writing in the first person.

Athletic Team (grades which participated)

Competed as a member of the Junior Varsity and Varsity Team. Practiced daily during the season. Any special wins, recognition or accomplishments? List these here.

Volunteering and Service

Description of Activity- Organization (grade levels of participation)

Descriptive bullets about activity (past tense action verbs, do not use the first person). Indicate duties and responsibilities. Site specific fundraisers with beneficiaries or results. Record total estimated hours.

Appendix B: Résumé Template *(continued)*

Honors and Awards

List Honors or Awards here (grades the honor or award was given).
A short description of the honor/award can go here. Make sure all acronyms are spelled out.

Skills and Interests

Technical: List any technical skills you may have here.

Language: If you are fluent in any languages, list here.

Interests: What are your interests? List them here.

(Feel free to forego the bolded titles and list other types of skills as bullet points such as “personable, strong people skills,” or “highly organized,” or “globally minded – traveled to...” or “marathon finisher,” or something else that might be a unique interest, skill, or accomplishment.)

Appendix C: Teacher Recommendation Information Form

Please fill out the following form after your teacher has agreed to write you a letter of recommendation. You will need to complete two separate forms, one for each teacher who has agreed to write on your behalf. After you have completed the form, please return it directly to your teacher. The answers to the following questions will be very helpful to your teacher, so please give full, thoughtful, and specific answers!

Student Name: _____ Teacher Name: _____

1. Name of course (list more than one, if applicable):

2. Favorite ideas/topics from class:

3. A SPECIFIC moment in which you were at your best in class or a project/assignment you are particularly proud of (feel free to give more than one example, but be specific):

4. What are your academic strengths in this class?

5. What are your academic challenges in this class?

**Appendix C: Teacher Recommendation
Information Form *(continued)***

6. Have you explored this subject beyond the classroom? If So, how?

7. How do you think your peers would describe you as a student in this class?

8. Is there any additional information you would like to share with your teacher? (optional):

Appendix D: Counselor Letter of Recommendation Form

Full Name: _____

Majors you are considering: _____

Careers you are considering: _____

Schools you are considering: _____

Schools you have visited: _____

What type of campus are you looking for? What do you expect to get out of your future college campus? (For example: urban, suburban, rural, major athletic affiliation, small/large class size, etc.)

Are you applying to any colleges as a legacy (i.e. one of your parents attended there)? If so, where?

Are you applying Early Decision (binding agreement) to a college? If yes, where?

Do you plan to play a Division 1 or Division 2 sport? If yes, which sport and which colleges are recruiting you?

List 3 adjectives that describe you. Explain each with a brief example.

What academic settings or assignments make you thrive? What interests you most?

What motivates you? What are your passions? Please describe any unusual talents or leadership abilities you have.

Have you ever experienced disappointment or failure? If so, how did you react, what happened, and what did you learn?

Appendix D: Counselor Letter of Recommendation Form *(continued)*

For what do you want to be remembered during your high school years? What do you consider your most significant contribution to your school or community?

Have you had any unusual experiences that might have had an impact on your school achievement (consider after school job, home responsibilities or difficulties, illness, emotional stress, etc.) Please explain.

Do you have any grades on your transcript that stand out (good or bad) that you would like your counselor letter to address in your recommendation? Please explain.

Please share a time you demonstrated a willingness to take intellectual risks and/or go beyond the normal classroom experience.

Please list your 2 most meaningful extracurricular activities/sports/jobs.

Activity/Sport/Job: _____

Years as Member: _____

Leadership Role: _____

Awards/Honors: _____

Activity/Sport/Job: _____

Years as Member: _____

Leadership Role: _____

Awards/Honors: _____

What is the topic of your college essay (personal statement)?

Is there anything else that you believe is important for your counselor to know in finalizing your college recommendation?

Appendix E

Transcript Request Form (updated August '18)



College Counseling Office, Oakland Catholic High School

Each student's educational information is protected by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This Transcript Request serves as the legal release for Oakland Catholic to submit educational information on your behalf.

1. Name _____
Last First Middle

2. Year of Graduation: _____ 3. Contact Phone Number: _____

4. I authorize Oakland Catholic High School to release my Official Transcript Un-official Transcript

5. Reason for Transcript Request: College Application Scholarship Application Job application
 Other _____

6. Name of Recipient (college, scholarship, etc): _____

**** Note: Oakland Catholic will not hand Official Transcripts to students, parents, or alumni. We will submit directly to recipient****

7. Address of Recipient: _____

8. Requested Deadline to Mail Transcript (you must provide at least 72-hours' notice): ____ / ____ / ____

For College Applications, Questions 9 – 13 MUST be completed before this form will be accepted:

9. Have you already completed and submitted the application to the college? YES NO

10. Application Type: Early Action Early Decision Regular Decision Rolling Admission

11. Application Deadline: ____ / ____ / ____

12. I applied via this type of application: Common Application This College's Specific Application
 Coalition Application

13. What other materials are required by this college/scholarship to complete their application?

Counselor Recommendation – please list counselor: _____

Teacher Recommendations – please list teachers: _____

Other: _____

Student Signature _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Oakland Catholic will not release any transcripts if you still have financial obligations owed to Oakland Catholic for any reason.
2. Students are responsible for submitting Standardized test scores to colleges directly from the testing agency.
3. If you request other materials be sent with your transcript, we will hold your transcript until ALL materials are available.

RECEIVED BY COUNSELING OFFICE: _____ (office use only)



With 16 Sports and 38 Clubs,
**You're Sure to Find
Your Place Here.**

From cross country to fencing, golf to crew, there is at least one sport for you, even if you're not the sporting type. Clubs? We have 38, from Environmental to Step, RadiOC Podcast to Ukulele, Model UN to Crocheting. Many students try as many as they can, and some just lock in on the one or two that fuel their passion. Not to worry. You'll find something you love at OC.



Only Here.
OaklandCatholic.org



Spirituality, Scholarship, Service

College Counseling Office | 144 North Craig Street | Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Phone: 412.682.6631 | Fax: 412.682.1056 | Email: counseling@oaklandcatholic.org

