



College Counseling FAQs

What factors should I consider in a college?

This is a great question for all students and families. The main thing you want to find is what we call the best “fit”. For each student, the factors that determine the fit can be different. Some of the more common things that students consider are size of college, distance from home, size of college town, majors/degrees, student activities, cost, and safety. Research the school on the internet, talk with the admissions reps, visit the school, use your college counselor, and talk with your family to explore these different aspects of a college. Try and talk to someone who goes to the schools you are interested in either a current student or recent graduate.

How do I apply to a college?

The easiest answer to give is that you start with the college’s website. Go to admissions, and they will tell you how to apply. They make it easy; they want you to apply! Once there, you may stay on that college’s website and do their application, you may be asked to use The Common App, and for some state schools, you may be asked to use a state common application on Georgia Futures. Try to think of your list of schools and how you could save time. If you can do more on The Common App, you can save some time. Once on The Common App, you may find other schools you can choose for an application.

How many colleges should I apply to?

There is no magic number! We always want you to be safe. A general suggestion from counselors is to have some (or at least one) schools that are safe schools, then have some that are match schools. This means you look like students who have been accepted to that school, however you know that it is still not a guarantee that you will be accepted. Then have some schools (or a school) that is a reach school. This is where you take a chance on a school that is more competitive with their admissions. You are a senior so now is the time to apply to schools and see what happens. However, it is best to have a safe approach as well.

How do I visit a college?

Just go! Due to COVID-19, many schools may or may not be doing campus visits. If they are, go and do the official information session and tour. Remember if you go in the summer, it will be quieter! If you can’t do an official tour, then take your own tour of campus. If they are not open for tours or you can’t get there, do as much as you can virtually. College websites are the best places to find how you register for an official tour. And don’t forget to talk with the college admissions rep who covers schools in Macon. You can also try and find someone you know, or FPD Graduate, who attends the school who might be able to give you a tour.



When are application deadlines?

Deadlines are critical! Deadlines can be different from school to school. Go to the college websites of the colleges you want to apply to and find the deadlines. Go ahead and find any scholarship/financial aid deadlines as well. Make a calendar with those deadlines. Be safe! Most schools have both an early acceptance deadline and a regular decision deadline. Some even have an early decision deadline, but this one is a little trickier and is more binding so be careful!

Will I possibly be interviewed by a college for admissions or a scholarship?

Possibly but not probably. General rule of thumb is that you have a better chance of being interviewed at a smaller school than a bigger school, and you have a better chance of being interviewed for a scholarship rather than for admissions. If you get an interview, go see Coach Thompson! Please don't go into an interview without some advice and some practice questions to consider.

What do I do after I have applied?

After you have submitted your application (make sure the payment goes through), make sure you have the official transcripts sent by FPD (add to Naviance) and make sure you send your test scores to that college. FPD cannot send those scores for you!

Also, after you have applied, you should get some communication from the college. This is most likely coming in the form of an email. They should give you some guidance on what to do next! Be sure to check the email you used on your application frequently. This is how the college will communicate with you and let you know if there is any further information they need.

How do I request that FPD send off my official transcript to a college?

We handle all transcript requests through Naviance. Students will be told how to do this at the beginning of senior year.

How does a college get my GPA?

FPD does not calculate an official college GPA. Colleges can factor the GPA differently, so we just send them the grades that are on the transcript. We will be glad to help calculate a GPA that would be like what a college would factor based off how they factor the GPA. A GPA calculation sheet will be emailed throughout high school and will be on Naviance. This will discuss HOPE, FPD and how many colleges would factor a GPA.



How does a college get my test scores?

Some colleges will allow a student to self-report the SAT or ACT on the college application. At some point, the official scores will need to be sent from College Board (SAT) or from ACT. Students will need to request their scores on their own from their College Board or Act accounts. FPD cannot send the official scores.

When do I start taking standardized tests?

We advise that you don't start too early and don't want you to start too late. We recommend that you "think" about taking a test towards the end of 10th grade. Some in 10th grade will think about it and go ahead and take one. Some will think about it and want to wait until the summer before 11th grade or early in the fall of 11th grade. All 10th and 11th graders will take the PSAT in the fall.

How do I register for a test?

Students must register for a test with the testing agencies. For SAT, you must go to CollegeBoard and for ACT, you must go to ACT. Once a student takes either the PSAT or an AP class, they should already have a CollegeBoard account. Students need to use the same account for all testing. They do not need to create multiple accounts.

Is there a difference between taking the SAT or the ACT?

The SAT and ACT are two different tests. They are similar but do have some differences. There is information on Naviance that explains the differences or just Google it. Colleges will accept both. They are scored differently so a concordance can help you determine which one is the better score. FPD recommends that you try to take both.

What does it mean if a school is test optional?

Test-optional is a higher education movement that has been gaining some momentum for many years. It simply means that it is optional and not required that you send in your test scores. If you like your scores and feel like they are in line with the admissions at a certain college, you can send them to them. If not, you have the option of not sending them in as part of your application. Keep in mind that other parts of your application will be evaluated in more detail. For example, your GPA, your rigor, your activities, your essay and your recommendations will be closely looked at in the holistic review. Some colleges that are test optional may also choose to conduct an interview. If you are offered an interview, we advise that you accept the offer and talk to the college counselor.



How do I know if everything has been received by a college and if I have been accepted?

Most colleges will provide an email to you once you finish an application. Many schools have a status check option or a portal for students to access. This should provide what has been sent to the college, it will often provide the admissions decision, and it could also be where the student knows what to do after being accepted. It is critical that the applicant check the email that he or she gave to the college on the application. Colleges communicate by email!

Do I need a teacher recommendation?

Yes, no and maybe! Yes, some schools do require a teacher recommendation. The process to request one will be covered by the college counselor at the beginning of senior year. Some schools only want one and some may take up to three. It all depends on the school. Some schools do not want a teacher recommendation. This is typically larger state schools. And at some schools, it could be optional. We say that optional means YES.

Do I need a counselor recommendation?

Yes, no! Yes, some schools require it. The college counselor needs the Senior Questionnaire or a resume in order to write the best possible recommendation on your behalf. Some colleges do not need a recommendation from your counselor. Again, a rule of thumb, is that larger state schools may not need one.

Do we need to do a FAFSA?

A FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. We highly recommend that all students and their parents fill out the FAFSA. If you are considering a private college, we recommend it. The FAFSA will open in the fall of senior year. You will use your last year's tax information. FAFSA is making some changes in 2023-24 so be on the look out for updates.

How do I apply for HOPE?

FPD will handle the submission of the grades so that Georgia Student Finance can calculate the HOPE GPA. The student/family must "apply" for HOPE. That can be done by either the FAFSA (but keep in mind that it is a year-to-year procedure) or by doing a state application called GSFAPPS. Both of those can be found on Georgia Futures.



What extra things do I need to do if I want to play a sport in college?

If you are interested in playing a sport at the next level, please discuss this with your high school coach. You also need to discuss this with any of your community coaches. They can give you the best advice on a good fit for you athletically. The college counselor will be glad to discuss anything else to do with the college decision. Depending on what level of athletics you intend to play, you will need to be “cleared” by the NCAA or the NAIA. That process begins on their website. You will need to create an account and talk to Coach Thompson about sending off your transcript.

Do colleges need to see my extra-curricular activities?

The safest answer is yes! You should be able to put your activities, leadership, community service, etc. on your college application. Most colleges will not take a resume you created, but you should be able to “tell” them about your activities on the application itself. Some schools may ask about them a lot and some may not ask as much. The extra-curricular activities can also be a key piece for scholarships.

What is the difference between merit-based aid and need-based aid?

Merit-based aid is based off your grades, testing and possibly your extra-curricular activities. These are things you have done and thus may have earned money for college. *Need-based* aid is determined by a family’s financial situation as determined by the FAFSA. There is also another aid application offered by CollegeBoard called the CSS Profile. It may be a better application for your family’s financial situation. Talk to the colleges to see if they will take the CSS Profile.

When do I have to choose a college?

The process starts with the college application. Don’t miss the deadlines. Colleges announce decisions at many different times. It just depends on the college. However, all colleges should have notified an applicant of a decision by April 1st. Students then have until May 1st to make a decision. They cement that decision by making an admissions deposit. Directions will be provided by the college.

What are the possible admissions decisions?

Admit—you are accepted and can make a deposit when you are ready.

Deferred—you have been put on hold right now. The college will continue to evaluate all applicants and will decide on you later. Reach out to the college and let them know that you are still interested. They may also ask you to update your application.

Wait-Listed—You have been added to a list from which a college can pull applicants later. The college does not usually go to the waitlist until after the May 1st deposit deadline. Therefore, please plan on attending another college as you make your college plans.

Denied—you have been denied as an admissions candidate for this year. Please look at your other college options and proceed. You can look at a possibly transfer to the college who chose to deny you.