



MatchCollege.com

Your
Complete Guide
to the
College Admission Process

Table of Contents

Chapter 1..... Understanding the College Admission Process

Chapter 2..... Planning to Succeed

Chapter 3..... College Information

Chapter 4..... The Scoop on College Admissions

Chapter 5..... Transition Time

Chapter 6..... Your Path to Understanding Financial Aid Options

Chapter 7..... Ideas When You Need to Pivot

Chapter 8..... Successfully Transferring Schools

Chapter 9..... How to Apply to College in the US as an International Student

Chapter 10..... Additional Resources

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hand holding a blue pen, writing in a notebook. The hand is wearing a grey, textured sweater. In the background, a white mug sits on a wooden desk, and several papers are scattered around. The lighting is warm and soft, 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 wide-angle photograph of a city skyline at dusk. In the foreground, a large, dark reflecting pool mirrors the sky and the buildings. The pool is bordered by a low, dark wall. In the background, several tall buildings are visible, including a prominent one with a blue glass facade and another with a green dome. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall lighting is a mix of the warm glow from the buildings and the cool tones 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.



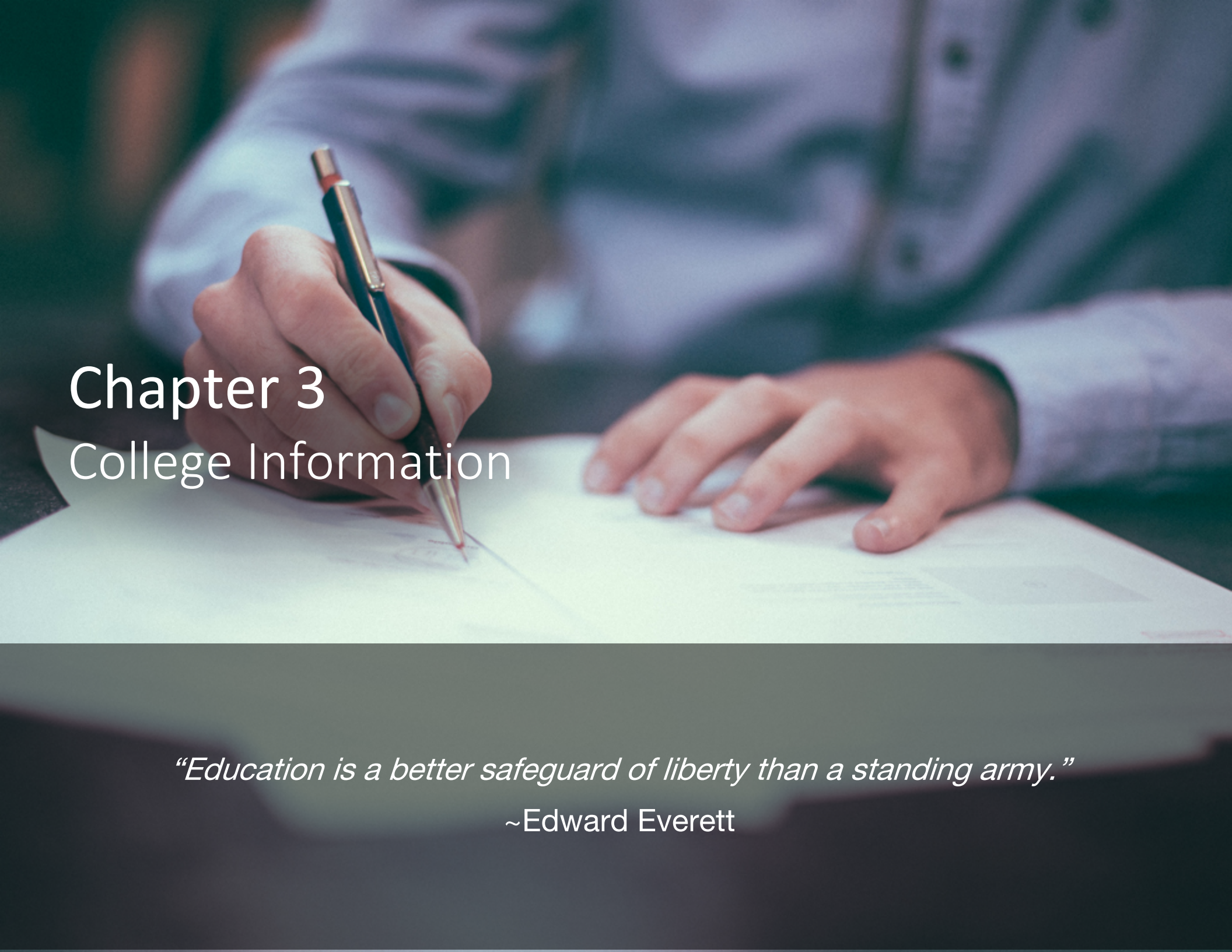
In addition to your questions about the school, you need to be prepared to answer some questions about yourself. At minimum, be ready to tackle the following questions:

- 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 piece of paper. The person is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. Their right hand holds a dark pen with a gold-colored clip and is in the process of writing on the paper. Their left hand rests on the paper to the right. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's shirt and some indistinct shapes.

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 your 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.

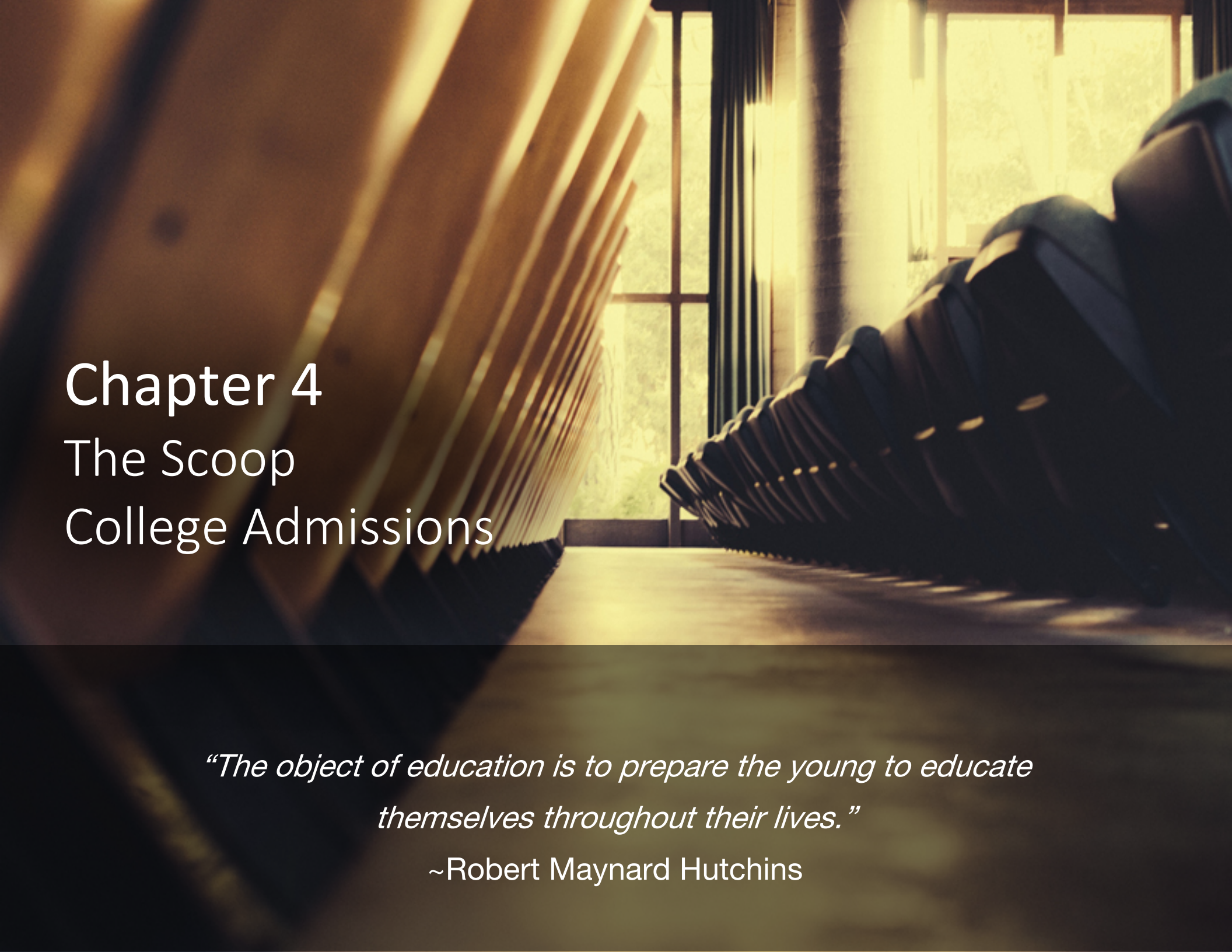
On and Off-Campus Living: What options are available to in-coming freshman? Options for transfers from another school? Is the quotient of on-campus living to off-campus living available? What types of housing is available to you, albeit dorm, condo, house, apartment, or other living arrangements? You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

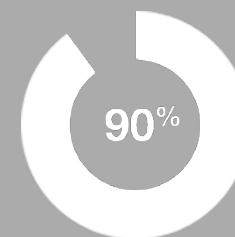
~Robert Maynard Hutchins

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

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