

## October 2021

10th & 11th grade students -  
Check with your school for date it  
expects to administer the PSAT

Attend virtual college fairs and  
meetings

Meet with college reps utilizing  
virtual visits

Seniors - Continue work on col-  
lege applications; complete Early  
Decision/Early Action applications

Complete CSS Profile if required  
by colleges

FAFSA available October 1st

Check College Board and ACT  
websites for testing opportunities  
in your area if you still wish to take  
an SAT or ACT exam

## November 2021

Seniors – File Early Decision/  
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college  
applications

Check College Board and ACT  
websites for testing opportunities  
in your area if you still wish to take  
an SAT or ACT exam

## The Importance of Likely Colleges

Most students add the names of a couple of 'likely' schools to their college lists without giving these 'safe' colleges much thought, because the applicants don't imagine they may need to attend one of them. However, students should apply only to colleges that they are willing to attend (and gladly!). Thus, you need to spend as much time researching the schools that are likely to admit you as you do on the schools that are likely to deny you.

Start by identifying the characteristics you like about your favorite schools. Whether you're looking for a certain academic program, internship opportunities, big sports and school spirit, active Greek life or an urban location, you can find these things at schools to which you are likely to be admitted. You just need to be open to possibilities.

It's not always easy to figure out whether a college is a highly likely admit, partly because your chances can actually change from one year to the next. If a school enrolls a bigger than anticipated freshman class, it may admit fewer students the next year and your admission prospects may move from highly likely to possible. If a public university has funding cuts, it may be more selective and no longer a highly likely admit. Then again, if you are a non-resident student applying to that public university, the need for out of state tuition dollars might make it a likely admit for you.

But, in general, you can get an idea of your chances by looking at a school's freshman profile. Instead of reporting an average SAT score or grade point average, many colleges report a 25 - 75 percent range, meaning that 25 percent of admitted students are below that range, 50 percent are within the range, and 25 percent are above the range. When your GPA

and test scores are above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of admitted students, you are more likely to be admitted, because, while many colleges look at extracurricular activities, recommendations and essays, your academic record is of primary importance.

You cannot assume anything at very selective schools. If you are applying to the Ivies, Stanford, Tufts, Duke, or any school where the acceptance rate is below 25%, even if your grades and scores are at the upper end of the applicant pool, you need to consider the school a reach. Test optional policies have muddied the admission waters even more. At these schools, a stellar academic record is just the first step in the competition for a place in the freshman class.

It's understandable, given the job market that recent college graduates have encountered, that many high school students are more concerned than ever with getting into the "best" college. They want to know that they will have good job prospects in the future. And their parents would rather spend the money on a school they perceive as securing their children's future.

However, there are advantages to "highly likely" schools. You might get a merit scholarship that would bring the cost down considerably. If you are one of the stronger students, you may have a better chance of earning top grades, especially in science classes where exams can be graded on a curve. That is very important to pre-med, pre-law, pre-business or graduate school students.

If you have chosen your highly likely schools carefully, you will be highly successful and as happy as you would be at a more selective school. Talk to your professors and take opportunities for internships with them. Get involved in campus life and community service and undertake some leadership roles! Have a marvelous and happy experience!

## Careers for International Relations Majors

*“While a degree in international relations does not lead to a specific career in the way that, for example, accounting or engineering does, a major in international relations, by emphasizing clarity in speech and writing, analytical skills and a detailed knowledge of world politics, prepares students for careers in government, journalism, law, non-governmental organizations, international business, and teaching and research.”*

Lehigh University Website

## Career Paths for Political Science Majors

International Business Relations

Campaign Managing

Intelligence Analysis

Journalism

Law Enforcement

Legislative/Government

Administration

Public Administration

Non-profit Administration

Urban Planning

Real Estate Management

## Majoring in International Relations/Poli Sci

Although business is currently the most popular major, the social sciences account for the second most frequently chosen major. The social sciences address the problems and challenges that affect our world today, and the knowledge and skills gained in these areas can be applied to nearly any career path chosen later. Our increasingly global society provides numerous opportunities for international relations graduates. Political science studies equip students for leadership positions as well as graduate studies in areas such as law.

Majoring in international relations might be a perfect fit if you are interested in history and languages, enjoy foreign travel and learning about different cultures, or find yourself fascinated by the political arena. Students majoring in international relations generally begin with survey courses in international relations, world history, sociology, anthropology, and micro and macroeconomics. This is a truly interdisciplinary study, generally taught by professors who specialize in political science, economics, or history. Since international relations is generally not a free-standing department at most colleges, the programs tend to differ in emphasis from college to college. Some colleges stress the United States' perspective while others take a more global view. In some cases, language, literature and culture receive greater prominence than the more typical emphasis on political science, economics, and history. By Junior year, students take classes that reflect their program's direction. These may include such courses as diplomacy, regional issues, international organizations, U.S. foreign policy, human rights, law, and national security. When choosing your college for this major, examine the course catalog to determine if that college's emphasis fits your area of interest.

A political science major might be a better fit for the student interested in current events, politics, social justice, community service, student government, and history.

Political science and government majors study both domestic and international issues such as civil rights, war and peace, economic development, and forms of government. The major begins with introductory classes in political science or international relations, along with classes in research and analytical methods. More advanced courses may cover such topics as global political economy, constitutional law, and international security. In many cases, poly sci majors also minor in a related field such as history, cultural anthropology, or economics. These courses help to provide a background that explains the factors that influence and shape political institutions. Capstone or research projects are common, and many students take advantage of opportunities to get practical experience in their field of interest. Internships in local governmental offices, a “Washington semester” working in D.C., and study abroad experiences all enhance the academic program.

As our society has grown more globally aware, graduates with degrees in international relations have become highly sought after. Many companies have moved to the international arena, creating a real need for individuals who understand international political, cultural, and economic issues. Graduates may start with entry level positions in the federal government, work for the United Nations or other humanitarian organizations, find positions with companies engaged in international business, or work in international journalism. Having experience living and working overseas strengthens the applicant's resume.

Political science and government majors will find themselves with similar career options. Many will enter fields such as federal, state and local government, business, public service, the Foreign Service, the diplomatic corps, politics, journalism, and public administration. Graduates from both of these majors often pursue graduate degrees in their field or go on to attend law school.

### Financial Matters: The CSS Profile



The bulk of college financial aid money comes from the federal government; this aid is distributed by colleges using information supplied by families when they complete the FAFSA, beginning October 1st. About 400 colleges, universities and scholarship programs, however, use an additional form, the *CSS Profile*, to gather more information in order to award their own institutional funds to de-

serving students. Students applying to college should check to see if this form is required by schools on their list. Some scholarship programs also utilize the CSS Profile. It, too, becomes available on October 1st each year.

The *Profile* provides a more complete picture of your family's finances; it also provides a way for you to describe special financial circumstances right on your application. Begin by logging on to the College Board website at <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>.

Use your College Board student account and password to begin the Profile process. Alternatively, parents can create a separate account, since sensitive financial information will be col-

lected. The first step after logging in to your account is to register for the correct year (2022-23) for this year's senior class. Now, complete the application—as you answer questions, the application will be tailored to your family's financial situation.

The application may be completed in one sitting or you can save information and come back to complete. You will need a number of financial documents, so get these ready before beginning the application. You will find a list of the needed documents once you sign in. Answer all questions carefully; answers are saved as you change screens. Unlike the FAFSA, there is a processing and reporting fee for this application.

### Volunteering Opportunities in a Pandemic

Young people today are often characterized by social media as impatient, entitled and easily distracted. However, that's not what we see. A significant number of high school students enrich both their communities and their souls by volunteering for a plethora of projects. Today's students are creative, care about the world, want to prepare for work that matters, embrace their entrepreneurial spirits, value collaboration and are very tech savvy. One of the ways in which they demonstrate their care for community, both local and global, is through community service and volunteer work. These endeavors also enrich their college applications and demonstrate to a college where they expend their spare time and energy and what kinds of services they value. Students find opportunities to explore their interests during the school year and during their school vacations.

In the spring of 2020, many of those options came to a crashing halt. Schools closed, clubs stopped meeting, community centers shut their doors and students went inside, behind

closed doors, as the authorities attempted to crush the curve of the Covid-19 outbreak. Suddenly, young people who were used to serving meals at the homeless shelter, volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club, tutoring the freshman Math students and helping out their schools' sports teams, were unable to take on anything outside the house. After the initial shock of the required switch to virtual learning, those same enthusiastic and eager students started to reach out and add community service back into their lives. Here are some great ideas:

Work with your local Meals on Wheels to deliver meals to shut in seniors; reach out to seniors in your neighborhood and offer to bring them groceries. And while we're talking about seniors, seek out seniors living alone in your neighborhood and visit them through the window, get their phone numbers and call to check on them often. Write letters to people shut inside nursing homes, enclosing stamped addressed envelopes with your notes to allow them to write back to you.

Call your local schools to see if you can help distribute food and other items to their families in need. Feeding America needs volunteers on the distribution side.

If you are old enough, consider donating blood. The Red Cross is in desperate need of all types of blood and platelets. Call your friends and encourage them to donate too.

Check out Be A Neighbor and Volunteer Match for more opportunities in your local area.

Online tutors for students are needed now more than ever, as so many young people are struggling with the switch to online classes. Teens Give is organizing online tutors in several subjects, and is available to high school students in need around the country. Good Tutors offers free one-on-one tutoring to underserved students via Zoom. Check with your teachers also.

Finally, check out Points of Light for a huge array of volunteer projects designed for a wide range of interests.



**Elizabeth Levine**

[liz@SignatureCollegeCounseling.com](mailto:liz@SignatureCollegeCounseling.com)

845.551.6946

[www.SignatureCollegeCounseling.com](http://www.SignatureCollegeCounseling.com)

## How Many Applications?

One question college advisors hear almost every week is “How many colleges should I apply to?” There’s not one number that is right for everyone. Some students apply to as few as three or four colleges, when the schools they are most excited about also happen to be schools where they are highly likely to be admitted. But some students and parents get nervous if they haven’t submitted at least eight applications, especially when they hear about other students who are applying to a dozen or more schools. The anxiety and feeling of competition leads them to apply to additional colleges that they are not seriously considering, resulting in extra work for students and admission officers, hundreds of dollars in unnecessary application fees, and more stress for everyone.

Some students want to apply to the most selective schools in the country and think that they will improve their chances of being admitted to one of them by applying to all of them. While students are sometimes admitted to one Ivy and not another, it doesn’t follow that the more schools you

apply to, the more acceptances you will gather. It is very possible for good students to apply to 15 of the most selective schools and end up with 15 rejections. In fact, a student who might have been admitted to one of these schools could end up sabotaging her chances by rushing to complete so many applications that she doesn’t take the time to tailor each application to a particular college. You are better off focusing your energy and submitting fewer thoughtfully prepared applications.

While it is essential to include some highly likely schools, the exact ratio of reach to highly likely schools depends on a number of factors, including your tolerance for rejection. If you dread the prospect of numerous rejections, apply to more highly likely and 50/50 schools and fewer reach schools. Focus on the one or two reach schools that you especially like. Otherwise you will always wonder if you would have been admitted. Students with a well-balanced college list will be rewarded by numerous options for college.