



THE COLLEGE PROCESS

STEM SCHOOL
HIGHLANDS RANCH
COLLEGE NIGHT

Good evening! My name is Kelli Myrick and I have been the College and Career Counselor here at STEM for the last 3 years. I went to Texas A&M University for my undergraduate degree, Colorado Christian University for my masters program, and earned my certification in College Counseling from the University of California - San Diego extended studies program in 2022. I am originally from Texas and have lived in Colorado with my husband for about 10 years. Prior to STEM, I was an admissions counselor for a university here in Colorado.

Myths about College Selection

1. There is one PERFECT college for everyone.
2. I've never heard of that college, so it can't be a good one.
3. There is no way my family can afford to go to a private or out-of-state college. I should only look at public colleges in Colorado.
4. To find the right college, I need to know exactly what I want to do now as my major or career.
5. Go for the "A" in the less difficult class because it will look better on my transcript.
6. What I do my senior year doesn't matter once I have been accepted.

1. There are a multitude of colleges you can be happy at! It is just our job to try and narrow down that list and find the "best" fit. I firmly believe that each student goes to the university or program that are meant to be at! Perfect doesn't exist ☺
2. There are over 3,000 four-year universities in America alone. I guarantee you haven't heard of every single one of them, but that does not mean it is not a reputable university.
3. While out of state schools and private universities can be expensive, there are often additional scholarships for out of state students. Private universities also typically give more scholarships and work more with you on financial aid.
4. On average, a college student switches their major at least 3 times. Over 80% of college students change their major at least once. It is perfectly normal to not know what you want your life to look like yet! College is a time to explore your interests and passions to determine what you want to do career wise.
5. Not true! Some colleges only look at your GPA, yes, but most universities are looking at our school's profile and your transcript instead of your GPA. They will be able to see the types of classes we offer our students on our profile and will see the types of classes you took on your transcript. Competitive schools want to see that you continued to challenge yourself and took advantage of as many of the opportunities the school offered academically.
6. Senior year is not the time to slack off! Colleges still care what courses you are taking your senior year. A college could technically rescind your acceptance if you do not take the types of courses you normally would during senior year, if you tell them your class schedule on your application and then change it to "blow off" classes, or if you do not pass the classes you are in.

Selecting Colleges to Apply To



The Selection Process

- Joint process among parent(s), student, and assistance from counselor
- Important for students to make an independent decision, not one based on peers or friends
- College match-making is a process!
- It's not about finding the best college. It's about finding the best college for you.
- The right college is where a student feels comfortable and will be happy and successful!

1. This needs to be student led. Parents and I need to support and help inform the students about their options, but make sure the student is the one driving this entire process. Also, make sure the student is the one that is contacting the universities admissions offices and not the parents (infrequent parent contact is fine).
2. While college matchmaking is a process, it is a wonderful time to start thinking about what environment you would thrive in both academically and personally.

Finding the Right Fit



There are many factors when you are determining the best fit for you and there are many ways to research!

Your Search Should Include

- Brochures sent from college
- Internet Searches
- College Fairs
- **Visits from College
Representatives at STEM**
- Counselor Conferences
- Campus Visits
- Information Session

Don't just look at one piece of research – look up many “sources” to get a good feel of the school. I highly suggest coming to as many college visits at STEM as possible even if you have not heard of the school (remember, there are 3,000 – you won't know about all of them! ☺).

Once you have narrowed down your list, make sure you are visiting at LEAST your top 2 schools. College tours, visiting classes, staying on campus (if possible) can really help you determine if the school would be a good fit for you. I am also a huge believer of the “gut feeling”. I visited my top school my senior year and when I stepped on campus I just had a weird feeling that this wasn't right for me. I ignored it, thought it was just because I was nervous to think about going to college....and ended up transferring to A&M. When I stepped foot on A&M's campus, it just felt right. Don't ignore that feeling!

College Fairs- local college fairs are always listed on my College Newsletter that I send at the first of every month.

Some College Search Engines:

Niche: <https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/all-colleges/>

BigFuture college search: <https://collegesearch.collegeboard.org/>

Cappex: <https://www.cappex.com/colleges>

Decision Factors

- Size of School
- Location
- Distance from home
- Activities/Athletics
- Public/Private
- Admissions Requirements
- Honors Program
- Facilities
- Reputation of School
- Faculty/Class Size
- Program/Major
- Support Services
- Cost
- Diversity
- Campus Personality
- Religious Affiliations

There are many decision factors when you think about what school might be a good fit for you. When you are filling out the After Grad packet, I ask you to write down any “must haves” for your college. It can be as broad as a honors college or Greek life, or as narrow as wanting to make sure you go to a school with a good football team in College Station, Texas!! I just really want you to think hard about what the “perfect” school looks like for you and then we will search to find something close to it!

US/American History

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California (all schools in the University of California or California State University system require US History)
- Delaware
- DC
- Florida
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Kansas
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Minnesota

The following states have some sort of US History or American History requirement to receive a high school diploma. **Make sure you double check admissions requirements of schools you are interested in to see if this course is a requirement for admission.**

- Mississippi
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wyoming

There are certain schools that require specific courses. The most common I have found is US History, American History, US Government and things of that nature. These states have some sort of US history requirement to graduate from high school, so it might be a good idea to check universities in these states (if you are interested, obviously) and see if there is a requirement for admission having to do with the states courses.

Campus Visits

For campuses where you are able to visit in person:

- Visit on a weekday and attend a class if possible
- Take the campus tour
- Try the food
- Talk to others besides the tour guide
- Ask the [Questions to Ask on a Campus Visit](#)

STEM Visits:

- STEM will be hosting colleges on campus each fall and spring. You can see which colleges are coming in the College & Career Newsletter

Once again, make sure you are visiting your top schools! I suggest going when classes are in session if it is a top school – this will show you what campus is like on a normal day.

Come to visits when college representatives are at STEM!! I will always send out a reminder email the morning of the visit to every high school student. .

Safety

Match

Reach

Safety A safety school is one where your academic credentials are above the school's range for the average freshman. You should be reasonably certain that you will be admitted to your safety schools. Like the rest of your list, these should also be colleges you would be happy to attend. In addition to an admissions safety school, it is a good idea to include a financial safety school on your list.

Match A match school is one where your academic credentials fall well within (or even exceed) the school's range for the average freshman. There are no guarantees, but it is not unreasonable to be accepted to several of your match schools

Reach A reach school is one where your academic credentials are below the school's range for the average freshman or a school that is incredibly competitive (private universities, Ivy Leagues, military academies). Reach schools are long-shots, but they should still be possible. A university with under a roughly 30% acceptance rate will be considered a reach for *every* student.

When we talk about the “average freshman” the data we typically look at is the middle 50% reported by schools. Not every school will report their middle 50% data. Your “dream school” can also be your safety or match school. My sister’s dream school was the University of Texas. In Texas, the top 6% of students at each high school are guaranteed admission to any state school in Texas. She was number 3 out of almost 700 students, so while UT was her dream school it was also her safety school. Do not feel like your dream school has to be a reach school.

If you do not *want* to go to an Ivy or top 5/10 university that is completely fine!!

OUR STUDENTS BY THE NUMBERS



6.3%
OVERALL ACCEPTANCE RATE

TEST SCORES

SAT: 1520-1570

ACT: 34-35

Middle 50% range for SAT & ACT scores for accepted students



Middle 50

Admitted Student Averages

Credentials based on the middle 50% of 2023 admitted first-year students. High School GPAs are weighted and may represent self-reported GPAs. SAT/ACT scores reflect the middle 50% score range for students who requested test scores be considered in their application review. For the 2023 first-year application, SAT/ACT scores are not required and we take a holistic approach when reviewing your application.

All Majors	College of Arts & Sciences	College of Engineering & Applied Science	College of Media, Communication & Information
Weighted High School GPA: 3.71 - 4.22	Weighted High School GPA: 3.70 - 4.22	Weighted High School GPA: 3.97 - 4.41	Weighted High School GPA: 3.58 - 4.07
SAT Total: 1270 - 1440	SAT Total: 1260 - 1430	SAT Total: 1350 - 1500	SAT Total: 1210 - 1335
Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing	Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing	Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing	Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing
ACT Composite: 29 - 33	ACT Composite: 29 - 33	ACT Composite: 31 - 34	ACT Composite: 27 - 31

Examples of the “middle 50” discussed when trying to determine if a school is a safety, match, or reach school.

If you do not *want* to go to an Ivy or top 5/10 university that is completely fine!!

How many colleges should I apply to?

- 2 Safety Schools (I know I will get in)
 - Community College
 - Meeting Automatic Admissions Criteria
 - Schools that only look at GPA and you have the minimum GPA needed to attend
- 3-4 Schools You Hope to Attend (Match)
 - Schools that do a holistic review
 - You meet most of the criteria listed on their website
- 1-2 Reach Schools

MAGIC NUMBER is 6 - 8 TOTAL!

If there are not any reach schools you actually want to attend, you don't have to apply to a reach school! I have had some students apply to one school and some apply to over 20. I recommend staying in the single digits if possible.

How much does it cost to apply to college?

- All 2-year community colleges are FREE
- Application fees range from \$25 - \$100
- Colorado Free Application Days (this is typically 1-3 days in mid October)
- Application fee waivers are available to students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.
- Some colleges offer their own free application day

As soon as I have the dates for the Colorado Free Application Days I will share them!

The Pieces of College Applications

General Overview

- Portals
- Admission types
- Deadlines

The Application

- Requirements
- Essays
- Holistic Reviews

The Extras

- Testing
- Transcripts
- Letters of Recommendation



General Overview

The College Application Portals

- Common App
 - Over 1,000 colleges and universities
 - If you are applying with Common App, you will need to link your Naviance and Common App accounts. This allows transcripts and letters of recommendation to be sent.
- Coalition
 - 115 Public & Private Universities
 - Some universities allow you to apply through Coalition *or* Common App (pick Common App - just trust me 😊)
- University Websites

If a university is on Common App and other portals too, I always suggest doing the application through Common App. It is the easiest portal to navigate. I am creating a slideshow with screenshots and videos to navigate the Common App. When it is completed it will be sent to all juniors, will be on my College Newsletter, and uploaded to the STEM College and Career website.

Application Types

Rolling Admissions

Schools that use a Rolling Admissions plan generally begin accepting applications in the fall, and they make admissions decisions on an ongoing (“rolling”) basis. Students can improve their chances of acceptance by getting applications in as early as possible. Since these schools fill their incoming spots over the course of a couple of months, the longer you wait to submit your application the less space they have available and admissions standards may increase.

Regular (“Deadline”) Admissions

Many schools set a specific deadline for applications to be submitted. Common deadlines are January 1st and January 15th (but this varies from school to school, so make sure you are aware of each school’s actual deadline!). All application materials must be received by the admissions office before the set deadline. No decisions will be made regarding applicants until after the deadline has passed and the admissions office has had the chance to review all applications. Therefore, the timing of your applications submission does not impact your admissions decision as long as it is submitted prior to the deadline.

Early Action VS Early Decision

Early Action means that you really like this school and it is one of your top choices. You can submit for as many schools as you want!

Early Decision means “D” for “Done”

–Legally binding agreement. Meaning you and your family **MUST** be okay with the financial piece of the school because it is **HIGHLY** unlikely that if you are accepted ED you will get out of it! You are only able to submit one ED application.

Most early action dates are November 1, so it's best to start as soon as senior year begins!

If you are thinking of doing Early Decision, I have to have a meeting with the you and your parents. Common App requires me to sign off that we have had a discussion about the legality of Early Decision.

Application Deadlines

- The deadline listed on the application is NOT the deadline to hit the submit button. It is the last day to have ALL REQUIRED pieces of the application submitted to the university.
 - Application
 - Fees/ Fee waiver
 - Essays
 - Transcript
 - Test Scores
 - Letters of Recommendation



The Applications

What is required in the application process?

- Submitted Application
- Application Fees
- Transcript
- Test Scores*
- Application Essay
- Teacher Letters of Recommendation*
- Counselor Letter of Recommendation*
- Supplemental Essays*

* Not required for every school

How do colleges review my application holistically?

ACADEMICS:

- Curriculum
- Grades/GPA
- School Profile
- SAT/ACT Scores
 - Take ACT/ACT
 - Retest if you would like to improve your scores
- AP Test Scores (optional, but will likely be used by competitive universities due to cancellation of SAT subject tests)

PERSONALITY:

- Letters of Recommendation
- Essay
- Leadership in Organizations
- Resume & Activities
 - Sports, Clubs, Jobs, Community Service, Internships, Mentorships, Apprenticeships, Summer Activities
- Interviews (optional for some colleges)

If a school is not granting admission based on just GPA and test scores, they will review the application in a holistic manner. They are taking everything about you into consideration to determine if you would be a good fit. A large majority of schools do holistic reviews.

College Essay Requirements

- Some colleges DO NOT require an essay
- Most Colleges require essays
- If the application says “recommended” or “optional” this really means **REQUIRED** if you want to have a strong application

So you want to apply to an Ivy League School or Military Academy?

- For **all** students, these institutions fall into the Reach School category
- It is important to note, that most students accepted to Ivy League or military academies are in the top 3% of their graduating class. Currently for the Class of 2025, this GPA range is: **4.58 - 4.75**
- This year many of these institutions are test-optional; however, typically students score on the SAT & ACT

These institutions are looking for WORLD CHANGERS. Often students have created non-profits, hold patents for inventions, and/or run their own companies while still in high school.

These are always a reach, but that does not mean I discourage you from applying! We have had students get accepted into top tier schools and military academies without being in the top 3%.



The Extras

SAT & ACT Testing and Test Optional Applications

- Students will not be penalized by test-optional policies if they decide not to submit their scores.
- Currently about 100 universities for the Class of 2024 are still test optional or blind
- By not submitting their scores, the other parts of their application will be reviewed and considered on a heavier weight
- If you have a great score and a school is test optional, we can strategize which schools to send those scores to based on freshman profiles.
- Be checking with schools you are interested in on their testing policies for admissions. There are some universities that have gone back to test required. Some of interest to our students include: MIT, Georgetown, public Florida universities, public Georgia universities, Dartmouth and Purdue. **This list could change every day. I will try and be as up to date as possible if universities switch back to test required.*

Double check with all the schools you are interested in to see if they are test—optional, test-blind, or still require ACT or SAT scores for admissions. If a school is test optional and you have a higher SAT or ACT score come talk to me! We can look at the freshman profile middle 50% for that school and be strategic on which schools we send your scores to.

SAT & ACT Testing Dates For the Rest of the School Year

This is on my website for you to reference and download. **April 16, 2024** will be the in school testing date for STEM Juniors. The SAT will be offered on this date.

SAT & ACT EXAM DATES

Register for the SAT at collegeboard.org

School CEEB Code: 060741

SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
August 26, 2023	July 28, 2023	August 15, 2023
October 7, 2023	September 8, 2023	September 26, 2023
November 4, 2023	October 6, 2023	October 24, 2023
December 2, 2023	November 3, 2023	November 21, 2023
March 9, 2024	February 23, 2024	February 24, 2024
May 4, 2024	April 19, 2024	April 23, 2024
June 1, 2024	May 17, 2024	May 21, 2024

Register for the ACT at actstudent.org

School Address: 8773 S. Ridgeline Blvd.
Highlands Ranch, CO 80129

ACT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
September 9, 2023	August 4, 2023	August 18, 2023
October 28, 2023	September 22, 2023	October 6, 2023
December 9, 2023	November 3, 2023	November 17, 2023
February 10, 2024	January 5, 2024	January 19, 2024
April 13, 2024	March 8, 2024	March 22, 2024
June 8, 2024	May 3, 2024	May 17, 2024
July 13, 2024	June 7, 2024	June 21, 2024

April 16 is the testing date for juniors at STEM.

Sending Test Scores to Colleges

- For BOTH exams: You can send your test scores for FREE if you select four colleges when you register for the exam (or within 9 days of taking the exam).
- If you do not select the schools up front to send your scores, it will cost you per school to send.
- Remember, colleges do not review your application until all required documents are submitted.
- During the application review process the university will ONLY look at your HIGHEST scores.
- Some schools SUPERScore, which means they add the highest scores for each section to get a new total overall score from all of your tests.
- If you wait to send the scores, it takes a minimum of 2 weeks for the university to receive your scores. If you send scores for FREE, the day you get your score is the day the colleges receive your score

This is all on you as the student! STEM does not send test scores to schools, you will need to send them through ACT or College Board. Make sure you plan for extra time for these scores to get to the universities you are applying for!

Official High School Transcript Request for Colleges & Scholarships

I will send transcripts electronically if the student adds me to the application or scholarship application portal (ie: Common App, Coalition, Boettcher Scholarship foundation, etc).

OR

If a student needs an official high school transcript sent for a “third-party” scholarship or different application portal students will need to email me

Once senior year begins, I will show all seniors how to add me as the counselor to their application portals. No need to worry about this just yet ☺

Requesting Teacher Letters of Recommendation

- Research the letter of recommendation requirements for each college or university you are applying to.
- Speak with the teacher IN PERSON no less than *three weeks* before the deadline
- Provide the teacher an email with a copy of your resume, AG Packet, and deadline.
- If application is on Common App, add the recommenders to your application
- Follow up with the teacher via email regarding the request. Be sure to thank the teacher!

1. Some schools are fine with any current teacher, some want any teacher you have ever had, and some want specifically a math or science teacher. Make sure you read the requirements before asking teachers to write a letter.
2. MINIMUM 3 weeks. The earlier you can let them know, the better.
3. This will help teachers remember specific awards you have won, programs you have completed, etc. Give the teachers some cushion time on the deadline. If it is due to the university on November 1, consider telling your teacher you need it to be completed a week before.
4. Once again, I will show you how to add teachers once senior year starts ☺
5. Don't be afraid to *kindly* remind your teachers of your letter as the deadline approaches.

Counselor Letter of Recommendation

- Ms. Grebe, Ms. Birchfield, or I can write counselor letters of recommendation for the Class of 2025!
- You will just need to email us to let us know who you would like to write your letter at the beginning of senior year.
- **Still add me as the counselor in each portal so I can send transcripts.** I will upload Ms. Grebe or Ms. Birchfield's letters if you have one of them write it for you!

After Graduation Packet (AG Packet)

The purpose of the AG Packet:

1. You are compiling all of the information you need to fill out a college application
2. The short answer questions enable me to write your Counselor Letter of Recommendation
3. You should share the AG Packet with other LOR writers

When you complete your AG Packet, please email it as a PDF to me at kelli.myrick@stemk12.org

Please be as “braggy” and specific as possible! For students I do not see on a regular basis, this packet will be a way for me to get to know you and information from this packet will be a large part of your letter of recommendation. It is also helpful to give this packet to anyone else you want to write a letter.

Good to Know Information



Pathways Programs

- Some universities offer Pathway Programs where students can attend a community college or another university and automatically be admitted after one year if they meet GPA requirements.
- Sometimes you will hear Pathway Program referred to as Auto-Admit Transfer programs.
- ALWAYS apply to your dream school because they could offer you a Pathway Program for entry!

For example, Texas A&M has the “Blinn Team” program. If you accept to be part of Blinn Team, you will attend Blinn College in College Station, and if you have a 3.0 GPA you will be auto-admitted to Texas A&M. If you are offered an option like this we can certainly talk it through together on if it would be a good idea for you to pursue.

Universities Can Track Interest

- Showing demonstrated interest *can* be that one thing that helps put your application over the edge! Every time you visit the college campus be sure to fill out a card.
- Every time the college visits STEM be sure to fill out one of the cards.
- Make sure you talk to the rep and get to know him/her. Often the reps that visit STEM are the reps that take the first look at your applications.

Don't let this be you!



Remember to keep working hard, challenge yourself with the types of courses you take, continue being involved in volunteer work and extracurricular activities, and remember to enjoy your final year at STEM too!

You only graduate high school once - make your senior year count!

Contact Information for Mrs. Myrick

Kelli Myrick, College Counselor at STEM

- kelli.myrick@stemk12.org
- Phone: 303-683-7836
- Website:
 - Stemk12.org
 - Hover over Student Support
 - Click College and Career Planning
- The College & Career Planning **Newsletter** can be found in the Student Support section of the STEM newsletter & on the College & Career Website.
- The newsletter is sent to every STEM junior and senior via email. Parents that would like to be emailed the newsletter can sign up by emailing me the names and email addresses to be added to my list.