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**PARENT**  
**GUIDE**  

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**to COLLEGE**





## DEAR PARENTS,

Choosing the right college is one of the most important decisions a family will make. It is an investment which will pay a lifetime of dividends. At TLU, we are committed to assisting you and your student through every step of your college search.

The information contained in the guide will assist you in helping your student throughout his/her college search, application and admission experience. Pay particular attention to the information about visiting campus, as there is no better way to get a sense of "fit" than with a campus visit. We've also worked to provide a comprehensive checklist for the transition from high school to college, which should serve you regardless of where your student applies or attends.

As you carefully consider the college that best fits your and your student's needs and expectations, we hope TLU will be among the top choices. We look forward to working with you and your student during this exciting process. Please call on us anytime we may assist!

Sincerely,

**Thomas J. Oliver**

*Vice President for Enrollment Services*



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## TLU AT A GLANCE

- Private, four-year, faith-based university for the liberal arts and sciences
- Located 35 miles from San Antonio and 50 miles from Austin
- 28 majors, 37 minors and 13 pre-professional programs
- 18 varsity sports teams in NCAA Division III and Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference
- 2015 *U.S. News & World Report* No. 1 "Best Value" and No. 2 "Best" college in the West
- Top baccalaureate college by *Washington Monthly* for contributions to public good
- "Best in the West" in Princeton Review's "2014 Best Colleges: Region by Region"
- President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll member since 2012

### Student Body

- 1,320 students enrolled (approximately)
- 59% of full-time students live on campus
- Over 90% receive financial aid
- 15% Lutheran
- 31% Hispanic
- 8% African-American

### Faculty

- 83 full-time faculty
- Average class size: 17

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## PRE-APPLICATION: CHOOSING MY COLLEGE

### Picking a Major

- **Consider skills and interests.** Choosing what to major in at college is the first step in career planning. It's important for students to look for something they enjoy and something at which they can excel. Something that's also challenging will keep them engaged, because no one wants to be bored.
- **Do some research.** Encourage your student to look up fields and job titles that sound appealing and check the educational requirements, salary, working conditions and longevity of the field to see if it stacks up to their ideal career.
- **Identify a program.** Select a school that offers a college degree or training program that best meets your student's career goals and financial needs.



### VIRTUAL TOUR

Many colleges offer virtual tours for those who cannot visit in person. Take a guided tour around campus and view photo galleries, videos and 360-degree panoramas.

- Check out the TLU Virtual Tour at [tlu.edu/#virtualltour](https://tlu.edu/#virtualltour).

TLU TIP



TLU offers 28 majors with 61 concentrations, 37 minors and 13 pre-professional programs. [tlu.edu/academics](https://tlu.edu/academics)

DOG DAYS



Make sure to RSVP for Dog Days, TLU's version of a college visit day, or schedule a personalized individual visit tailored to your student's interests. [tlu.edu/visit](https://tlu.edu/visit)

### Visit Campus

The campus visit is possibly one of the most important steps in the college search process. Even with galleries of campus photos and virtual tours, the sense of community and feeling like home is something that can only be experienced in person.

High school is the perfect time to visit colleges. Many universities offer individual and group tours. Group

tours may happen during open visit days when colleges invite students to take part in a daylong visit program. Depending on the size of the university, a generic campus tour with a group of others may be the only option. If you have several questions, an individual tour would be recommended so it can be customized to your student's needs and interests.

## VISIT CHECKLIST



- Get a guided tour of the campus
- Meet with an admissions counselor to talk about the application process & scholarship opportunities
- Meet with a financial aid counselor for questions about grant and loan options
- Meet with the department chair or a professor in your intended major/field
- Eat a meal on campus
- Meet with a coach (if planning to participate in athletics)
- Sit in on a class (make sure to ask for a class in your student's area of interest)
- Attend an event or game

## VISIT TIP

**Find an Event** hosted by your student's intended major or area of interest and schedule to visit the campus that day. Ask the admissions office to coordinate with the faculty or student organizers to let them know your student is interested in their program so you can meet with them and get a better feel for the fit.

## TLU TIP

For TLU application deadlines and further details about these options, visit [tlu.edu/application-guide](https://tlu.edu/application-guide).

## APPLICATION

### Application Types & Deadlines

#### Early Decision

This option is a binding agreement between the student and the university, and should only be used for the student's top choice.

#### Early Action

Early Action is for students who wish to receive early notification of their admissions status but do not want a binding agreement to attend. For those who like to plan ahead, but still want to keep their options open, Early Action is the way to go.

#### Regular Decision

Regular Decision is a non-binding agreement and the typical application option found at most colleges and universities. Since this is when the largest volume of applications are submitted and processed, students will be notified of admission in the order the application and all supporting documents are received.

#### Late Decision

Applications submitted after the Regular Decision deadline will end up in the Late Decision category and are considered on a space-available basis. This option is great for those who maybe only applied to "reach" schools or very popular programs with limited space, or anticipated taking a year off. This option could be your student's last chance to get in before waiting another semester or year to start classes. Not all colleges offer this option, so make sure your student is applying for the semester they want to start.

# COLLEGE APPLICATION PREP CHECKLIST

- Take the PSAT to indicate future standardized test scores and how much studying will be required to do well.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT early and often. Figure out which test best suits the student's academic and test-taking abilities. Research top-choice schools for which test scores are accepted and how they are calculated if taken more than once.
- Pass all high school classes required for graduation and college admittance. This usually includes 4 years of English, 4 years of math, 3-4 years of social science, 3-4 years of science and at least 2 years of foreign language. Check top-choice colleges for individual requirements that may be different.
- Get good grades. A high GPA can get a student automatically admitted based on class rank and/or help them earn more in academic achievement scholarships.
- Earn college credit while still in high school. If a student takes an advanced placement class, they will be prepared to take the AP test and possibly earn credit towards college. The same goes for dual credit classes, usually offered in collaboration with universities so credits transfer easily.
- Brainstorm college essay topics. Prompts often ask about career goals or why the student chose a particular major or area of interest. Have a life-changing, humbling or eureka experience ready to share. Make note of the specifics you like about each top-choice college.
- Catalog all school club, extra-curricular and volunteer activities throughout high school years, in addition to work or internships. These will help students stand out, especially if grades are not perfect, and possibly earn more in merit scholarships.
- Identify a few teachers, counselors, administrators, coaches or mentors to ask for recommendation letters for college applications. These recommenders should know the student well enough to give an accurate glimpse into their work ethic, scholastic aptitude and strengths. Provide them with a resume of accomplishments and activities for them to highlight.
- Know how to request high school transcripts and how each college wants them sent. Usually, transcripts must be sent directly to the college from the high school in a sealed envelope, so it's best to plan to do this early. Some colleges allow a copy of the transcript for the application, but all will require the official final transcript be sent after graduation.
- Write Thank You notes to anyone who helped with recommendations, transcripts or college search.

## Filling Out the Application

Many universities accept Apply Texas or The Common Application, allowing students to apply to multiple schools by filling out just one application. While specific questions and prompts for writing samples or essays may vary, the basic information only needs to be filled out once.

Once your student decides which colleges to apply to, they should pick the application option that will work for most of their choices. If they need to fill out more than one application, they can refer to answers on another one, as the questions are pretty standard across all applications.

When your student is ready to submit the application, there may be an application fee required. This fee is usually nonrefundable, so it's best to narrow down the number of colleges to cut down on application costs.



### TLU TIP

TLU accepts Apply Texas, The Common Application and the TLU Application and waives all application fees.

## STANDARDIZED TESTS & GRADES

Standardized tests like the SAT and ACT are great ways for colleges and universities to measure a student's aptitude and knowledge in different areas. Most colleges accept scores from either test, but some students may do better on one test over the other. We suggest taking the SAT and ACT at least once. It's a good idea to retest with whichever exam the student felt most comfortable.

## TLU TIP

**TLU accepts both critical reading and math SAT and ACT scores.**

TLU also "super scores," meaning if a student tests multiple times, the highest of the individual subscores will be averaged together, resulting in the highest composite score possible.

## SAT or ACT?

If the PSAT isn't a good indicator about how a student will do on the SAT, there is always the ACT. Generally, the SAT is best for those with outstanding vocabulary and grammar, essayists who rely on history and facts, quick thinkers who rely on reasoning rather than formulas, and fans of breaks in long lines of questioning. The ACT may be better for speed-readers, persuasive or personal essayists, punctuation and paragraph structure enthusiasts, math whizzes, and those who may not be the greatest test takers.

## When to Take the Test

Most students take an ACT/SAT starting the spring of their junior year. It's important to take the test early so students have time to study and retake again if they feel they need to. Most universities have minimum test score requirements for admission, but they may not be published. You can usually find the average test scores on college search sites that will give you an idea of the ideal score. Check the deadline for submitting test scores with the individual colleges since they vary.

## FINANCIAL AID: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

The price tag for college may seem daunting, but with scholarships, grants and work study options combined with payment plans, tuition and fees won't seem quite so intimidating. Financial aid will also help ease the burden on your checkbook, often allowing you to defer payments until after your student receives their diploma.

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[tlu.edu/finaid](https://tlu.edu/finaid)

### FAFSA

The key to understanding financial aid is knowing you and your student are primarily responsible for contributing to the cost of a college education. To determine a student's eligibility for need-based federal and state grant aid, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be filed each year. Based upon the information provided on the FAFSA, the federal government will determine your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is used to calculate financial need for federal and state aid.

#### TLU'S FAFSA CODE

**003641**

Complete and submit the FAFSA and submit the FAFSA by the April 1 priority deadline to ensure maximum eligibility for financial aid.

Each January, the FAFSA is available for the upcoming school year. It is best to fill it out as early as possible because some aid is awarded on a first come, first served basis.

While there is a deadline to submit the FAFSA, the earlier you submit the FAFSA and all of the other information requested, the sooner you'll receive a financial aid package.

To complete the FAFSA, you'll need to provide personal, financial and tax information. If you've filed your taxes already, you may be

able to automatically retrieve the information from the IRS using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. If you haven't, you can use estimated tax information and update it later.

The FAFSA should be completed online at [www.fafsa.gov](https://www.fafsa.gov) each year a student is in college.

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[tlu.edu/fafsa](https://tlu.edu/fafsa)

## WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID?

Once offered admission, a student should:

- File the FAFSA at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov). Complete and submit the FAFSA by the priority deadline to ensure maximum eligibility for financial aid.
- Respond to any requests for additional information, such as a state residency form, verification worksheet, and tax transcripts, as soon as possible.
- Pay the deposit to confirm intended enrollment.

### Types of Federal Student Aid Grants

Grants and scholarships are often called "gift aid" because they are free money—financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid. Grants are often need-based, while scholarships are usually merit-based. Grants and scholarships can come from the federal government, state government, college or career school, or a private or nonprofit organization.

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**Federal Pell Grants** are awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or a professional degree.

**Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)** are administered directly by the financial aid office at each participating school and are considered "campus-based" aid. Not all schools participate. Funds are limited.

**Federal TEACH Grants** are for students who plan to complete coursework needed to begin a career in teaching. Grant recipients must teach in a high-need field at a school that serves students from low-income families.

**Tuition Equalization Grants (TEG)** are meant to help make up the difference in tuition costs so the student would not pay more at a private university than they would to attend a public institution. TEG is for high financial need undergraduate students of participating private nonprofit Texas colleges only. Texas residency required.

### Loans

Student loans are real loans (like a car or home loan) that must be repaid with interest. The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program is the largest federal student loan program, in which, the U.S. Department of Education is the lender.

**Federal Direct Subsidized Loans** are for undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. This loan is used to help cover the costs of college. The school determines the amount you can borrow. The student does not need to pay interest while enrolled at least half-time, during the first six months after leaving school or during deferment.

**Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans** are for undergraduate, graduate and professional students who are not required to demonstrate financial need. The school determines the amount a student can borrow. The student has the option to make interest payments while enrolled, otherwise interest is accrued and added to the principal.

**Federal PLUS Loans** are for graduate or professional students and parents of dependent undergraduate students to help pay for education expenses not covered by other financial aid. The maximum loan amount is the student's cost of attendance (determined by the school) minus any other financial aid received. Borrowers may not be eligible if they have adverse credit history. Parent borrowers are responsible for paying the loan and cannot transfer it to their student.

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[tlu.edu/loans](https://tlu.edu/loans)

## Work Study

A work study job gives the student the opportunity to earn money to help pay educational expenses. Both on-campus and off-campus jobs are available to students awarded federal (FWS) or Texas (TCWS) work study awards.

## WHO WILL QUALIFY

Most students are eligible to receive financial aid from the federal government to help pay for college. General eligibility requirements are that a student must:

- Demonstrate financial need.
- Be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen.
- Be registered with Selective Service, if they're male (they must register between the ages of 18 and 25).
- Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program.
- Be enrolled at least half-time to be eligible for Direct Loan Program funds.
- Sign the certification statement on the FAFSA stating they are not in default on a federal student loan and you will use federal student aid only for educational purposes.
- Show they're qualified to obtain a college or career school education by having a high school diploma or GED.



The Dramatic Media department and School of Music at TLU offer talent scholarships for students interested in music, theatre and film. Scholarship audition applications can be found at [tlu.edu/music-scholarship](http://tlu.edu/music-scholarship) or [tlu.edu/drama-scholarship](http://tlu.edu/drama-scholarship).

## Scholarships

### Academic and Merit Scholarships

Many scholarships are awarded for academic achievement and merit based on grades, test scores and extracurricular activities provided in the admission application and do not require an additional application for a specific scholarship. Scholarships that require separate application may be awarded based on other personal qualities or background.

### Performance and Participation Scholarships

Colleges will often offer talent scholarships for students intending to study fine arts. These can require the student to major or minor in that particular area, as well as be an active participant in the program. Students will need to submit a separate application for the scholarship and usually schedule an audition or portfolio review with a professor from their area of study. Participation awards may be available for an academic program or a specific club or organization on campus.

#### TLU TIP

Check out the TLU scholarship grid to see the academic scholarship amount students can receive, just based on GPA and test scores. [tlu.edu/affordability](http://tlu.edu/affordability).

### External Scholarships

While many scholarships are considered institutional and are awarded by the college to which the student applies, there are many other external scholarships available. Businesses, foundations, religious or community organizations, civic groups, professional associations and ethnicity-based

organizations may offer scholarships for anything from academic achievement to involvement to the student's intended field of study. Students should start researching and applying for external scholarships during the summer between the junior and senior years of high school since some applications are due as early as a year before college begins. Scholarship money may go directly to the college or sent by check—either way, make sure to let the school know about any external scholarships, as it may affect the amount of financial aid awarded.

## Award Letter

The award letter explains the combination of grants, loans, and work study a college is offering. The offer might also contain state and institutional aid, grants, and scholarships that have been awarded by the university.

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[tlu.edu/scholarships](http://tlu.edu/scholarships)



## **CONTACT TLU OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS**

The TLU Office of Admissions is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and select Saturdays.

For more information, visit [tlu.edu/admissions](http://tlu.edu/admissions).

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