College Application Guide:

Navigating Your Path to Success

Cheongna Dalton School
College Counseling

Dear CDS Students and Families,

Welcome to the College Application Guidance program at Cheongna Dalton School (CDS). As you prepare to embark on the exciting journey toward higher education, our college counseling team is committed to supporting you every step of the way. This process can feel overwhelming at times, but you are not alone—we are here to provide the resources, clarity, and encouragement you need to navigate the path with confidence.

This guide has been thoughtfully designed to help you understand each phase of the application process, stay informed about important dates, and explore a wide range of academic opportunities both in Korea and around the world. Whether you are considering universities in the United States, Korea, Canada, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, or Australia, our goal is to help you make informed decisions that reflect your strengths, interests, and aspirations.

At CDS, we are deeply committed to the values of honesty, fairness, and responsibility throughout the college application process. These values not only guide our support but also shape the partnerships we maintain with universities across the globe. We expect our students to uphold the same principles as they move through this journey.

As you begin this next chapter, remember that your growth—both academically and personally—is at the heart of this process. We are honored to walk alongside you and your family as you pursue the opportunities ahead.

Warmest wishes,

CDS College Counseling Team

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Important Dates for 2025-2026

AUGUST 2025

August 23 – SAT administered at CDS

SEPTEMBER 2025

- September 8–12 Early Decision application period for Korean universities
- September 13 SAT administered at CDS

OCTOBER 2025

- October 1 FAFSA opens (Financial Aid Forms)
- October 4 SAT administered outside CDS
- October 15 Early Action deadline for select U.S. colleges
- October 17–18 ACT administered in Korea
- October 22 PSAT/NMSQT administered at CDS

NOVEMEBR 2025

- November 1 Early Decision deadline for U.S. colleges
- November 1 Early Action deadline for many U.S. colleges
- November 8 SAT administered outside CDS
- November 13–26 Early Round deadlines for Hong Kong universities
- November 15 Early Action deadline for select U.S. colleges
- November 30 UC application deadline

DECEMBER 2025

- December 6 SAT administered at CDS
- December 12–13 ACT administered in Korea

JANUARY 2026

- January 1 Regular Decision deadline for many U.S. colleges
- January 8–February 5 Regular Round deadlines for Hong Kong universities
- January 14 UCAS application deadline for most U.K. universities

FEBRUARY 2026

- February 6–7 ACT administered in Korea
- February 23–March 19 Application period for public universities in Singapore

MARCH 2026

- March 14 Digital SAT administered at CDS
- March 15–April 15 Admission decisions released for many U.S. colleges

APRIL 2026

■ April 10–11 – ACT administered in Korea

MAY 2026

- May 1 U.S. College Decision Day (commit and submit enrollment deposit)
- May 2 Digital SAT administered outside CDS
- May 4–15 AP Exams
- May 18–22 AP Late Exams

JUNE 2026

- June 6 Digital SAT administered at CDS
- June 12–13 ACT administered in Korea
- June 20 Graduation

JULY 2026

- July 6–10 Application period for Overseas Koreans Admissions (Korean universities)
- July 10–11 ACT administered in Korea

SEPTEMBER 2026

September 7-11, Early Decision application periods for Korean colleges

For SAT: https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/dates-deadlines

For ACT: http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/taking-the-test.html

For TOEFL: http://www.ets.org/bin/getprogram.cgi?test=toefl

^{*} Students are responsible for knowing registration dates and deadlines for all tests.

Timeline

This timeline is a structured guide designed to help students navigate the college application process with clarity and confidence. While it provides a general framework, individual situations may vary, so it is important to meet regularly with your college counselor to tailor this plan to your needs.

Junior Year

- Individual Meeting: Schedule a one-on-one session with your counselor to discuss academic goals and future plans.
- Workshops: Attend college counseling workshops hosted throughout the year.
- **Extracurricular Profile:** Update your activities in Cialfo under the *Profile* tab.
- Standardized Tests: Take the SAT or ACT at least once to establish baseline scores.
- Letters of Recommendation: Request at least one recommendation from a core academic teacher (most colleges require two).
- College Research: Begin building your "Longlist" in Cialfo.
- College Visits & Info Sessions: Attend CDS visits and virtual sessions offered by universities.

Summer (Between Junior and Senior Year)

- **Research:** Deepen your understanding of majors and schools of interest.
- Campus Visits: Visit campuses in person or explore virtual tours.
- **Explore Interests:** Participate in summer programs, internships, courses, or personal projects.
- Essay Drafting: Brainstorm and draft your Common Application personal essay.
- Extracurricular Update: Add new activities to your Cialfo profile.
- Test Prep: Prepare for additional fall testing if needed.

Senior Year

August through October

- Counselor Meetings: Continue regular check-ins.
- Cialfo Updates: Move colleges from Longlist to Shortlist (especially for U.S. schools).
- Application Questionnaires: Complete the Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire.
- Standardized Tests: Register for any remaining SAT/ACT test dates.
- College Fairs / Info Sessions: Attend events to learn more about programs and requirements.
- Admissions Research: Carefully review each college's application components and deadlines.
- Essays & Supplements: Write and revise all required essays.
- Deadlines & Planning: Inform your counselor of any ED/EA plans.
- Financial Aid: Track FAFSA and other aid requirements.

Hong Kong Applications: Begin early-round application prep (for mid-November deadlines).

November, December, January, and February

- Application Completion: Submit all applications with deadlines through February.
- UCAS Submission: Submit UCAS applications by January 14, the official equal-consideration deadline for most U.K. universities.
- Admission Notifications: Inform your counselor of ED/EA results.
- Deferred Applications: Discuss strategies if your application is deferred.
- Singapore Applications: Begin applying—note that deadlines vary by university.
- Japan Applications: Start preparing essays, resumes, and supporting documents.

March, April, and May

- Decision Notifications: Update your counselor on all decisions. U.S. decisions typically release from mid-March to early April (varies by institution).
- Waitlist Options: Review your options with your counselor.
- Final Decision: Confirm your enrollment and notify colleges you will not attend.
- Grade Maintenance: Continue strong academic performance to protect your admission offer.
- **FAFSA:** Submit by the school-specific priority deadlines; final submission by end of June if applicable.

After Graduation (Korean University Applicants)

June, July, and August

- Record Review: Meet with your counselor to review your Student Record for Korean university applications.
- College List: Finalize your list of Korean universities with your counselor and family.
- **TOEFL (If Needed):** The August test date may be your final opportunity to improve your score.

September

Application Deadlines: Carefully reconfirm all deadlines and ensure all materials are ready.

By following this timeline, you will stay organized and prepared, ensuring you meet all key deadlines and requirements with confidence.

Choosing Your Academic Destination

If you were attending a local Korean school, you would most likely apply to Korean universities. However, your journey at CDS opens the door to a world of global opportunities, offering an expansive landscape of academic pathways across multiple countries. The challenge is no longer the lack of options—but choosing the destination that best aligns with your aspirations.

While many CDS graduates choose the United States or Korea, a significant number pursue universities in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the European Union, Hong Kong, Japan, or Singapore. Each destination offers a distinct academic environment, cultural experience, and set of admission expectations.

To support your decision-making, this guide provides a clear overview of major university systems around the world, highlighting their features, admissions processes, and considerations. For deeper information, visit the CDS counseling website, where you will find additional resources and links to guide your exploration.

United States of America

In the United States, "college" typically refers to institutions focused on undergraduate education, while "university" offers both undergraduate and graduate programs, often with strong research components. Students enjoy flexibility in choosing or changing majors, exploring subjects during their first two years before declaring a field of study.

Choosing a Major

Many U.S. college freshmen begin their studies without a declared major, which is perfectly acceptable. It's common to explore various subjects during the first two years of study before settling on a major. This exploration period allows students to discover their interests and strengths. Most students fulfill general education or "core" requirements during this time to ensure a well-rounded educational foundation.

Transferring Between Institutions

The U.S. higher education system offers considerable flexibility in transferring between institutions. For instance, if a student decides to transfer after their sophomore year, the new institution may accept most, if not all, of their earned credits, depending on the alignment of courses. Transfer acceptance is often based on college grades rather than high school performance.

Admissions Criteria and Processes

Admissions criteria and processes vary significantly across U.S. colleges and universities. Each institution sets its own standards, requiring a unique application, supplemental questions, and different deadlines. This diversity in requirements can be complex, with even those accepting the Common Application often requiring additional materials specific to their institution.

Completing College Applications

Completing college applications may seem daunting, but it's crucial to give yourself plenty of time to fill them out thoughtfully. Admissions requirements and deadlines vary, so it's essential to check carefully to ensure you've completed all necessary requirements. Your college counselor is available to answer any questions you might have throughout the process.

Essays

Essay topics for colleges are typically released in the spring or summer before your senior year. While specific directions vary, the purpose of the essay is for the admissions officer to learn more about you. Many schools require one large essay and smaller, supplemental essays, so it's important to check the requirements for each college.

Extracurricular Activities

Colleges will give you the opportunity to report your extracurricular activities and interests. Focus on your most meaningful activities and list them in order of importance. Keeping this section up to date can assist you in completing your applications.

Sending Official Test Scores

When you take standardized tests like the SAT, ACT, TOEFL, or IELTS, you are the one who receives and "owns" the scores. Some colleges allow students to self-report their scores on their application, which can result in significant cost savings.

Recommendations

Most applications require a counselor recommendation and teacher recommendations. Counselor recommendations provide information about your academic performance, extracurricular activities, and character. Teacher recommendations focus on academics and coursework. It's essential to plan ahead and give your teachers plenty of notice.

Additional Recommendations or Materials

If you think you might benefit from submitting supplemental recommendations or materials, consult your college counselor first. It's crucial not to overload your application with unnecessary materials.

Application Deadlines

Colleges in the US have a wide range of application deadlines, so it's important to consult deadlines early and pay close attention to requirements. Individual colleges typically offer multiple deadlines, including early decision, early action, and regular decision.

Navigating the US college application process requires careful planning and preparation, but by understanding the requirements and staying organized, you can position yourself for success.

Korea

With the increasing trend of CDS students applying to Korean universities, understanding the intricacies of the application process is crucial. This guide provides an in-depth overview of the various admission pathways, evaluation criteria, and application procedures, tailored to meet the diverse needs of CDS students.

Admission Pathways

CDS students have three primary admission pathways to Korean universities:

Early Decision (Holistic Admission):

- o Application Period: Typically mid-September.
- Eligibility: Open to CDS students competing with local Korean students. Certain programs may offer advantages based on the applicant's background or qualifications.
- Process: Applicants can apply to a maximum of six universities, considering various aspects of academic achievements, extracurricular activities, personal qualities, and potential contributions to the university community.

Overseas Koreans Admissions:

- Application Period: Typically early July.
- Eligibility: Korean national students who studied abroad for at least three academic years, with one year in grades 10-12 studying in a foreign country where one parent was employed.
- Process: Applicants can apply to a maximum of six universities, acknowledging their unique circumstances and international experiences.

International Students Admissions:

- o Eligibility: Open to foreign nationals, excluding those with dual Korean citizenship.
- o Process: Application periods and criteria vary by university.

Evaluation Criteria

Korean universities meticulously evaluate applicants based on:

- Academic Competency: Assessing GPA trends, AP exam scores, and occasionally SAT scores to gauge academic readiness and integrity.
- Career Competency: Evaluating subject proficiency and depth of extracurricular engagement relevant to the chosen major.
- Community Engagement: Assessing collaboration, communication skills, and ethical values demonstrated within the school community.

Application Procedures

- Personal Statements/Recommendations: Beginning 2024, the requirement for personal statements and recommendations has been eliminated.
- Application Timeline: Rolling admission starts in mid-September, while overseas Korean
 applicants apply in early July, with specific schedules communicated by universities.
- Interview Process: Formats vary by university, ranging from major-specific interviews to more general discussions on motivations and activities.

Announcement of Successful Candidates

Results, including successful candidates and waitlisted individuals, are typically disclosed from mid-November to the end of December, providing clarity on admission status.

By understanding and effectively navigating these processes, CDS students can enhance their chances of successful admission to Korean universities, leveraging their unique backgrounds and academic profiles.

Australia

Australia's academic year commences in February, with a mid-year intake in July. Typically, applications are due in October, a few months post high school graduation. Plan your activities between graduation and university commencement accordingly.

Admission Criteria and Pathways

Australian universities accept American high school diplomas with additional requirements. Highly selective universities may demand high SAT scores and two to four strong AP scores. Others may assess transcripts, recommendation letters, and SAT scores holistically. Inadequate qualifications may necessitate enrollment in a six to twelve-month Foundation Year program, leading to university admission.

Application Process

There's no centralized application system in Australia. Non-Australian passport holders must adhere to individual university application guidelines. Australian passport holders apply via state tertiary admissions centres.

Program Selection and Duration

Applicants must decide their field of study upon application, with courses focusing on that area. Most programs span three years, and the school year begins in February. Some universities offer mid-year intake in late June or early July.

Additional Resources and Support

For guidance on studying in Australia or navigating the application process, consider contacting International Development Program (IDP) Education Australia. IDP Education serves as a comprehensive resource for Australian education information and assistance.

Application Considerations

Most Australian universities primarily consider SAT or ACT scores for admissions. Some programs may require AP scores or review high school transcripts. Letters of recommendation and personal essays are typically not required for admission.

When to Apply

Australian universities admit international students on a rolling basis, allowing applications up to a year before enrollment. Applying five to six months before the intended start date is advisable. Residential hall applications should be submitted early, potentially before university applications. It is advisable for students to wait to apply to Australian medical programs until after they have officially graduated from CDS and received a diploma.

Utilizing the Gap Year

Consider utilizing the time between high school graduation and the start of university for gap year experiences or personal development.

Australia offers a diverse range of universities with varying admission criteria and pathways. With careful planning and research, studying in Australia can be a rewarding experience, offering unique academic opportunities and a vibrant cultural environment.

Canada

In Canada, universities grant bachelor's and advanced degrees, while colleges focus on vocational and technical education. Within Canadian universities, schools are referred to as faculties or colleges, similar to US and UK terminology.

Admission Requirements

Each Canadian university has minimum admission requirements based on Canadian grading standards. These requirements vary between faculties and may include specific course grades, especially in subjects like science and mathematics. It's essential for American-patterned school graduates to review requirements carefully, as grading scales differ.

Application Process

Ontario universities use the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC), a centralized application system similar to the UK. Students submit a single application through OUAC, which is then forwarded to their chosen universities. Application deadlines typically fall at the end of November.

In other provinces, students apply directly to universities. After submitting an application, universities will request transcripts and other documents. Students should ensure their unique student ID number is included on all documents for proper filing.

Flexibility in Major Selection

While students may apply to a specific field of study, Canadian universities generally allow flexibility to change majors within the first two years of a program.

Application Considerations

Most Canadian universities prioritize grades in core academic subjects from the last two years of high school. Some institutions are adopting a more holistic review process for certain programs, which may include short essays or lists of extracurricular activities. Letters of recommendation are rarely required.

How to Apply

The application process for Canadian universities is straightforward. Students complete individual university applications and submit their high school transcript. Ontario universities utilize the OUAC online application for applying to multiple institutions in the province.

Application Deadlines

Deadlines for Canadian universities typically range from early January to late March, with some selective universities recommending early- or mid-November applications. It's important to check each school's website for specific deadlines and consult with a college counselor if needed.

Hong Kong

Recently, many students from CDS have expressed growing interest in universities in Hong Kong due to enticing factors such as proximity to Korea, positive job prospects, high world university rankings, and slightly lower tuition costs compared to the US or UK. The application process for Hong Kong universities is similar to that of US universities, with early and regular application rounds.

Application Period

The early application round typically closes in mid-November, while the regular round closes in early January. Applicants are required to submit an application, personal statement, and supporting documents through each university's application portal. They also nominate recommenders who can provide insights into their academic and extracurricular achievements.

Admission Criteria

Hong Kong universities employ a holistic review process, taking into account not only academic factors such as GPA, SAT, and AP scores but also leadership activities, major-related pursuits, potential contributions to the community, and involvement in local volunteer work. Recommendations from teachers and counselors are highly valued and considered as part of the evaluation process.

Timing of Admissions Offers

Admissions offers may begin as early as December and continue until May or even July of the subsequent year. Applicants may receive firm offers directly from the university they applied to in Hong Kong. For those who receive conditional offers or have not yet received an offer, submission of mid-year grades after the end of the second quarter of the 12th year or final grades after graduation may be required. It's essential to ensure that any pending AP or SAT test scores are also sent promptly.

Additional Considerations

Students are advised to consult with their counselors to determine the programs or faculties that best align with their academic and career goals. Participation in extracurricular activities and a demonstrated passion for major-related interests are highly regarded by Hong Kong universities. Applicants should diligently prepare all required documents and adhere to deadlines to enhance their chances of admission.

Studying in Hong Kong offers students a unique opportunity to experience a vibrant and dynamic academic environment while enjoying cultural diversity and excellent prospects for future career opportunities. By understanding the application process and meeting the requirements set forth by Hong Kong universities, students can embark on an enriching educational journey in this global city.

Japan

Keio, Waseda, Sophia, Ritsumeikan, and International Christian University (ICU) are among the major universities in Japan tailored specifically for English-speaking students from international schools. Waseda also offers an international program attracting students from outside Japan. For Japanese students applying to local universities, admission decisions primarily hinge on examination results. Some Japanese universities, such as Keio University and Waseda University, now offer international departments with English-taught courses, paralleling Sophia and ICU, each with a distinct admission process for interested students.

Academic Structure

Most universities in Japan follow a liberal arts-based curriculum. Initially, students undertake a broad range of courses in their first two years, followed by specialization in their chosen major for the final two years. Japan features both private and public universities. While most courses are conducted in Japanese, a select few programs are offered entirely in English, albeit with limited capacity and high competition.

Application Considerations

Japanese universities adopt a holistic approach to application review akin to US institutions, albeit with greater emphasis on standardized test scores. SAT or ACT scores (often favoring SAT), along with GPA, form the core evaluation criteria. Additionally, applicants must submit high school transcripts, write essays discussing their alignment with a particular school and intended major, provide recommendations, and may be subject to panel interviews with professors. English-taught programs generally waive Japanese language exam requirements but may request TOEFL scores, even for fluent English speakers.

How to Apply

Japanese universities don't have a centralized application system, with some universities still employing paper-based applications. It's crucial to meticulously follow each university's application instructions available on their respective websites.

When to Apply

Admission deadlines and start dates vary across universities, with some institutions offering multiple admission cycles. English-taught programs at Waseda, for example, begin in either September or April, whereas other universities typically start in September. It is crucial for applicants to check and adhere to the specific deadlines of each university. The application process often kicks off as early as December or January of the senior year, with most deadlines situated in the spring or early summer.

Supplementary Requests

Applicants to Japanese universities should consult the college counselor for a supplementary request form, required for each school applied to.

By comprehensively understanding and adhering to these guidelines, applicants can effectively navigate the application process for Japanese universities.

Singapore

Interest in Singapore universities among CDS students is increasing, driven by factors such as the country's political and economic stability, its reputation for public safety, and the availability of financial support programs like the government's tuition grant program. Additionally, the widespread use of English as the official language in Singapore facilitates seamless daily communication. Singapore boasts a diverse array of university options, all offering courses conducted in English. While admission to traditional public universities is highly competitive and typically requires a clearly defined academic direction, Singapore also hosts public polytechnics, foreign universities, and art and design schools, catering to a wide range of academic interests. Degree programs in Singapore generally span three to four years.

Application Considerations

Public universities in Singapore place significant emphasis on high test scores, often requiring SATs or ACTs, as well as AP exam scores. Notably, major Singaporean national universities do not require the submission of recommendation letters. However, application requirements vary by institution, underscoring the importance of reviewing individual university websites for specific course of study requirements.

How to Apply

Given that there is no centralized application system in Singapore, applicants must refer to each school's website for detailed application instructions and adhere to them diligently.

When to Apply

Application deadlines vary across institutions, making it crucial for applicants to carefully review each university's website for pertinent deadlines and intake periods. Typically, applications are submitted between November and early March for the August intake periods.

Additional Information

National universities in Singapore, including the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, and Singapore Management University, are highly competitive, particularly for international students. While these institutions prioritize quantitative factors like test scores during the evaluation process, qualitative factors such as extracurricular activities, leadership experiences, awards, and volunteer work are also taken into consideration. Prospective applicants typically submit their applications to Singapore universities from mid-February to the end of February during their senior year. It's advisable for students to have completed required courses and attained high SAT and AP exam scores, as well as commendable school grades, by this time.

The National University of Singapore introduced five short essays as part of the admission process starting from the 2023 intake. Additionally, certain majors at the National University of Singapore may have prerequisites for admission, necessitating students to seek guidance from their counselors beforehand. CDS students typically apply after mid-year grades come out, which becomes possible after the second quarter. Furthermore, students who receive tuition grants from the Singapore government are obligated to work in Singapore for three years post-graduation or secure employment with a Singapore-based overseas entity. Failure to comply with this condition may necessitate the reimbursement of tuition grant funds.

By comprehensively understanding and adhering to these guidelines, CDS students can effectively navigate the application process and enhance their chances of securing admission to Singapore universities.

United Kingdom

The UK is home to prestigious institutions like Oxford, Cambridge, and others, offering diverse educational experiences. The shorter duration of undergraduate programs allows for an early entry into professional life or further studies. Many universities provide opportunities for internships or a year abroad, enriching the student experience.

In the UK, students typically focus on one or two subjects for their entire degree program, offering a highly specialized education. Unlike the US system, there are no general education requirements. Most degree programs take three years to complete, except in Scotland, where they often last four years.

Choosing a Major

Choosing a major in the UK involves committing to a specific area of study, as transferring between subjects usually requires starting the degree over. However, combining two subjects, such as French and History or Business and International Relations, is also possible.

Application Requirements

UK universities primarily consider high scores on Advanced Placement (AP) exams for admissions. Students without qualifying scores may need to complete a foundation course. The application process typically includes writing a personal statement and may involve specialized admissions tests for certain courses.

Navigating the Application Process

The application process in the UK, managed through UCAS, requires careful planning and early decision-making. Students must select up to five universities and decide on their degree when applying. Academic performance is crucial, but non-academic components like personal statements and extracurricular activities also play a significant role.

Application Components

Students must submit a personal statement highlighting their motivation for the chosen degree. Recommendations and standardized test scores may also be required. Deadlines vary, with earlier deadlines for Oxford, Cambridge, and certain courses. Additional requirements, such as interviews and aptitude tests, may apply for these universities.

Preparing for Success

To improve admission chances, students should focus on achieving high AP exam scores, crafting a compelling personal statement, and engaging in relevant extracurricular activities. Thorough research into university requirements and strategic selection of degree options are essential for a successful application.

By understanding the unique features of UK universities and navigating the application process effectively, students can increase their chances of admission to their desired institutions and embark on a rewarding academic journey.

College Application Policies

At Cheongna Dalton School (CDS), we are steadfast in our commitment to upholding values of honesty, fairness, and responsibility throughout the college application process. Our dedication to these principles has fostered positive relationships with universities worldwide. To maintain these trusting relationships, we expect our students to adhere to the following guidelines and agreements:

Early Decision Commitment

Opting for a binding Early Decision (ED) application to a college or university signifies your pledge to attend that institution as your first-choice school globally. If admitted under ED, you are required to withdraw all other college applications, regardless of their location. To reinforce this commitment, CDS will suspend processing requests for transcripts or any other application-related documents for other institutions.

Mandatory Notification of College Applications

Integral to our application support system is the requirement for students to inform their college counselor about the list of colleges or universities they intend to apply to. This policy ensures that students do not independently or with external counselors apply to colleges without CDS's knowledge. Non-compliance with this policy will result in a limitation on the school's support for the student's application process, including the issuance of necessary documentation and transcripts.

Waiver of Rights to View Recommendations

Recommendation letters from teachers and college counselors at CDS are crafted to truthfully advocate for the student while remaining confidential. Acknowledging the weight of confidential recommendations with admissions officers, it is beneficial for your admission prospects to waive your right to view these documents. Therefore, CDS mandates all students to waive their right to access their recommendation letters, enhancing the credibility and impact of these endorsements.

Disciplinary Reporting

Aligned with our commitment to honesty and responsibility, CDS is obligated to report any disciplinary action resulting in an out-of-school suspension when colleges request such information during the application process. This policy underscores our dedication to transparency and integrity in representing our students to higher education institutions.

By adhering to these policies, CDS students reaffirm their commitment to the school's core values, ensuring a college application process that is fair, respectful, and rooted in integrity.