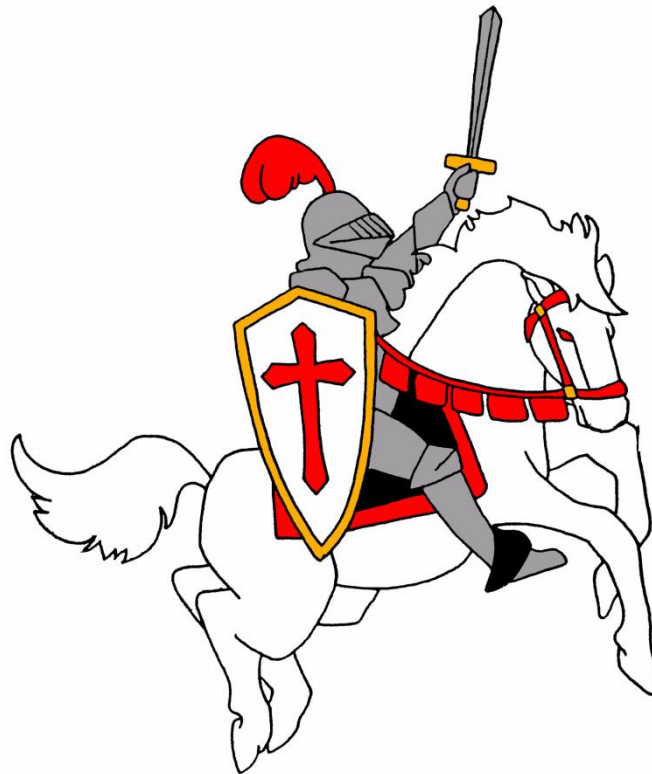


# LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL NORTHWEST



## PLANNING GUIDE FOR COLLEGE

Prepared  
By The  
LHNW Guidance Department

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## **The College Search**

Getting into college is work. Like any other major purchase, it requires research and careful thought. Begin by evaluating your strengths and weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. Colleges are not looking for a particular response; they simply want to discover whether or not you have thought about yourself and can articulate those thoughts carefully.

### **Identify Characteristics Important to You**

- Atmosphere
- Cost
- Majors, educational programs
- Location
- Reputation
- Size
- Type of school

Research Colleges That Interest You; there are over 3,500 Colleges and Universities in the United States

### **Use:**

- College guide books, catalogs magazines, etc. – all available in Guidance Area
- College websites
- Talk to friends, teachers, relatives, counselors, etc.

### **Contact Colleges and Request Information**

Visit the college's website to find out more about the college and to request information. The Undergraduate, Academics (Majors and Programs), and Admissions tabs on their website are typically the best places to find information about the application process, admission requirements, majors, and financial requirements. You can join their mailing or email list, schedule campus visits, and apply all through their website. As you gain information about the colleges through mailings, emails, and websites, create separate folders for each one that you are considering.

Each year many college representatives come to Lutheran Northwest to meet with students. Each student can choose to meet with 7 different college representatives during the school day. Take advantage of this opportunity to meet with the admissions representatives and gain more information about these colleges.

# College Checklist

What Do I Like About  
This College?

<b>College Characteristics</b>	<b>College A</b>	<b>College B</b>	<b>College C</b>
Type (Private vs. Public)			
Location			
Size			
Academic Programs			
Academic Facilities			
Atmosphere			
Housing/Dining			
Extracurricular Options			
Faculty (Credibility)			
Cost (Tuition/Room & Board)			
Availability of Financial Aid and Required Forms			
Admissions Requirements/Deadlines			
Miscellaneous			

## What Are Colleges Looking For?

Most colleges look for students with many interests. Part-time work, interesting summer adventures, or unusual experiences are also important. Colleges look for well-rounded students and those who have an outstanding accomplishment to their credit.

From freshmen year on, the courses you select are just as important as your grades in those courses. The strength of your academic preparation will affect your ability to complete undergraduate requirements.

## Suggested Course Load:

<u>Years</u>	<u>Subject</u>
4	English
4	Mathematics
4	Science
3	Social Science
2-3	Foreign Language
1	Fine Arts (music, art, drama)
1	Practical Arts (typing, computer)
	additional areas – computer science and speech (public speaking)



## **DEFINITIONS**

**ACH** – Achievement Tests: A testing program used primarily for placement; however, some colleges will require this for admission. Tests the level of knowledge in specific academic subjects. To register see SAT packet.

**ACT** – American College Testing Program: One of the most widely used college entrance exams; four-section test in the areas of English, mathematics, reading comprehension, and natural sciences. Composite scores range is 0 – 36.

**SAT** – A widely used college entrance exam; two-section test in verbal and mathematics; verbal and mathematics scores range from 200 – 800.

**Associate Degree** – A two year degree, usually obtained at a community college.

**Bachelor of Science (B.S.)** – A four to five year degree typically awarded in the natural sciences and professional/technical fields.

**Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)** – A four to five year degree typically awarded in the arts and humanities fields.

**College Board** – A non-profit organization, which oversees several college admission services and tests including the SAT exam.

**Common Application** – Accepted by over 100 colleges and universities. You may complete the application once on line and all the participating institutions that you apply to for admission will use it.

**Early Action** – Applicants are notified early of the college's decision. No formal commitment of attendance is required.

**Early Decision** – Admission plan whereby the student applies early in the senior year to a first choice college and is notified of acceptance before the regular application deadline.

**Rolling Admission** – Admission plan whereby applicants with complete files are reviewed and notified of acceptance on a continuous basis.

**Liberal Arts** – Includes a wide variety of subjects, including social sciences, humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, and foreign language.

**Standard Candidate's Reply Date** – May 1 is the usual date by which you must respond to a college that has offered you admission.

## **THE APPLICATION**

The application is your most direct and specific form of communication with the colleges. College applications are found on the college's website. Students generally apply to 3 – 6 colleges.

### **The Application File Includes:**

- Application form
- Counselor Recommendation
- Profile
- Teacher Recommendations
- Essay(s)
- Correspondence between you and the college

### **Suggested Procedures for College Applications**

- Be organized!
- Make a file for each application; write the deadlines on the front.
- Make a copy of the application to use as a rough draft, especially for pre-writing essays and short answer questions.
- Read all the instructions carefully, answer all questions completely.
- Save a copy of your complete applications.
- Sign and date the application.
- Bring or email the school portion of the application to Mr. Nelson (imcdonald@lhasa.com) for him to complete.
- When filing online, download the Counselor Section – if there is one – fill out your name, etc., and bring it to Mr. Nelson, or enter his email address ([mnelson@lhasa.com](mailto:mnelson@lhasa.com)) and they will send the request directly to him.
- If there is no Counselor form to download, notify Mr. Nelson where you have applied so he can send a copy of your transcript to those colleges.
- Apply early and be aware of deadlines (“postmarked” or “in office by \_\_\_”).

Once your application is completed, continue your correspondence with the institution, i.e., visit, interview alumnus, and notify the admissions office of additional awards or honors you receive.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

Your transcript includes your semester and year grades, grade point average, rank in class, and test scores including PSAT/NMSQT exam, ACT exam, and SAT exam if taken.

## **HIGH SCHOOL PROFILE**

The high school profile includes a variety of information about your high school and your class, including curriculum, enrollment, accreditation, grade scale, memberships, college matriculation, and college acceptances. This information helps the college admission people to know both you and your school.

## **THE ESSAY**

Colleges want you to put forth your best effort. This is not the time for last minute, haphazard efforts. Approximately one third of all four-year colleges and universities prefer or require an essay. The purpose of the essay is to more fully develop an understanding of the applicant and to evaluate their communication skills.

### **Helpful Hints**

- Keep your topic manageable
- Write out two or three rough drafts
- Read your essay out loud (some admission committees will)!
- Don't put the task off.
- Use examples, illustrations on your topic, bring it to life.
- Ask a teacher or parent to read it.
- Check spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Do not use a flowery or inflated style – be yourself.
- One essay may NOT fit all colleges you are applying to.
- Proofread – Proofread – Proofread!
- “The best essays are creative, thoughtful, self-reflective. They're short, candid, and express the student's energy, wit, and intelligence.” – College Application Essays by Laurie Williams
- “Some of the most impressive essays are not necessarily sophisticated in vocabulary but they communicate effectively.” – Steve Syverson, Director of Admission, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI

### **Some Essay Questions**

- Write a personal statement about yourself.
- Why are you applying to \_\_\_\_\_?
- What book had the greatest influence on your life?
- Who has been the biggest influence in your life?
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, or national concern and its importance to you.



## **PORTFOLIO/AUDITION – PERFORMING ARTS**

You may wish to submit a portfolio or ask to audition for a particular program at the college or university. While you can ask for a review from the admission office, it may be better to contact an appropriate faculty member directly to arrange an evaluation. Some institutions require or prefer a portfolio/audition for admission and/or scholarship.

## **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

A letter of recommendation is a summary, which pulls together the elements of your high school life. Recommendations are based on comments, grades, personal observation, and any information provided by you. The function of the letter is to help colleges understand you as an individual in the school and community. Recommendations include comments and descriptions on a student's depth of participation in extracurricular activities, initiative demonstrated, risk-taking factors, service, and awards. Writing recommendations is time consuming and demanding. Faculty members write letters of recommendation because they care about you and your future.

### **Just a Few Reminders**

- Try to ask teachers who have taught you recently and like you.
- Consider asking a teacher that you have had for more than one course.
- Gear your recommendation to fit your interest. It makes sense to have a science teacher's recommendation if you are, for example, applying to a pre-med program.
- Make sure you complete your section of the form if one is supplied. If none is supplied, make sure that the teacher has all the necessary information. They should NOT have to look for information on you.
- Provide faculty with a list of colleges that you are applying to, along with a resume. Include activities, G.P.A., interests, etc.
- Supply the teacher with the address of the institution and time frame for them to have the recommendation mailed.
- Ask well in advance of the deadline, preferably two to four weeks prior to the date you want the application mailed.
- Deliver the recommendation form(s) and any necessary materials they may need to write the recommendation.
- Discuss your college and career plans with the faculty member who is writing the recommendation.

## **CHOOSING A MAJOR**

On average, twenty percent of entering freshmen indicate "undeclared" as their proposed major. Many institutions do not permit first-year students to declare a major. Take your time!

## **CAMPUS VISITS**

Since college will be your home for the next few years, a visit to the campus is probably the best way to learn about the college or university.

### **Suggestions for the Campus Visit**

- Schedule your visit through their website or by phone, preferably two weeks in advance; look up or ask for directions and parking instructions. Most college websites offer the ability to schedule your visit from their website – look for the Admissions/ Visit/ Undergraduate tabs.
- Special requests – let the admissions office know what you want to do while on campus, e.g., meet with a coach or faculty member. If you are late or have to cancel, be sure to call!
- Check to see if there is a “visitor’s day” or group program that may interest you.
- Don’t ever visit a campus without stopping by the Admissions Office. It’s silly to go the distance and remain unknown. Visit the Admissions Office, say hello, and fill out an information card.
- If you interview with an admissions counselor, it’s courteous to write a thank you note.
- Wear nice but casual clothes – you’ll be doing a lot of walking, so wear comfortable shoes.
- Allow plenty of time for parking and finding the correct building and office.
- Avoid visiting during the summer or on weekends; weekdays provide a more accurate view of daily college life.

### **Suggested Items to Visit/Investigate**

1. Interview
2. Talk with students
3. Talk with faculty and/or academic advisors
4. Attend a class
5. Investigate your academic interest(s)
6. Stay overnight in the residence halls
7. Tour the campus
8. Talk with the financial aid office
9. Visit the library, computer labs, recreation facilities, etc...
10. Investigate transportation options
11. Identify career placement services
12. Inquire about student activities; visit the student union
13. Pick up a campus newspaper; read the bulletin boards

### **Questions to Ask a Tour Guide**

- What do you like most about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do many students go home on the weekends?
- Are campus jobs readily available?
- Is it possible to study in the dorm rooms?
- Why do you go to \_\_\_\_\_?

## **THE INTERVIEW**

Few institutions require an interview but most colleges encourage them. The interview is an exchange of information. You are evaluating the college and they are evaluating you.

### **Practical Hints**

- Be positive
- Talk intelligently
- Maintain good eye contact
- Don't spend the interview making excuses for your record or test scores
- Try to leave the interview committee with something about yourself that may not emerge from the application or transcript
- Determine how you want the interviewers to remember you
- Know yourself! (Know your SAT, ACT, G.P.A., Class Rank)
- Interviews last between 30 minutes to 1 ½ hours; typically, interviews are with the student first and then the parent(s) are invited in
- Follow up with a thank you note to the interviewer

### **Group Interviews**

- Information sessions often are given in conjunction with a tour, usually 5 – 20 people

### **Alumni Interviews**

- Some institutions demand an alumni interview
- Some places that are quite a distance from you offer alumni interviews close to where you live

### **Questions an Interviewer May Ask You**

- Why are you considering \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What motivates you?
- What do you want to get out of your college experience?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- Where else are you applying and why?
- Where would you see yourself in ten years? Twenty years?
- What books have you read recently?
- What is the most significant contribution you've made to your high school or community?
- What subject did you like best in high school? Least?
- What are you thinking of as a possible major?

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

Almost every college requires the ACT or SAT. Some schools require one to three achievements tests. Most colleges in the Midwest accept the ACT; however, if you do not know where you are going to college, it is suggested that you take both the ACT and SAT. The September, October, and December dates of the senior year can be crucial for scholarship money. Scholarship decisions by most colleges are being made after these testing periods. The usual routine of testing is to test in late spring of the junior year, retest in the fall of the senior year, and if required to take the achievement tests your college require in December. Colleges will take your best score, so it can be helpful to retake the ACT or SAT.

**LUTHERAN NORTHWEST'S CEEB (SCHOOL CODE NUMBER) IS: 231-408**

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

There are no hard and fast rules about financial aid because the state and federal governments control both funds and methodology. Things tend to change annually. The amount of dollars available for aid also varies from year to year.

Learn about ways to pay for college. Money does not need to stand in the way of a college education. Financial aid is available for those who otherwise could not afford to go to college. Work, special college loans, grants, and scholarships are all used to help meet the expense of college. Go to the site [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) to learn about scholarships. This is a free service.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

Applying for scholarships is time consuming and hard work, but it's worth it! Apply for as many scholarships as you reasonably can. The more scholarships for which you apply the better your chances for winning one are.

There is money out there! It's up to you to find out who is offering the money and how you can qualify. One of the first places to begin is to check with the colleges you are considering. Consult the college catalog, financial aid officer, or admission counselor. Also, you may want to investigate specific academic departments within each college; however, the majority of department money is usually reserved for upperclassmen. Many local scholarships are available on the NW Guidance page under scholarships.

## **Other Sources of Scholarship Money**

- Parent's workplace
- Church
- Civic clubs (Rotary, Lions, etc...)
- American Legion
- Any organization a family member belongs to
- Scholarship bulletin boards and guide books at your school
- Public libraries
- **DO** Research about scholarships

## **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**

To receive a financial aid package from most colleges, you need to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The application and more information is available at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). This is done in your senior year. You will need to have your tax information available when you apply. If you have not completed your taxes, you may use estimated figures; however, be prepared, you will eventually need to supply your finalized tax information to them. Some institutions will also use their own forms; ask the college to make sure you are using the correct information. Complete the entire form; computers reject incomplete forms.

Apply early! You can apply as early as October 1 and it is suggested that you apply no later than February 15. Financial aid is distributed on a first come, first served basis. Some institutions have specific deadlines, ask the college.

### **How do you apply for Federal Student Aid?**

- 1. Create an FSA ID.** Students, parents, and borrowers should create an FSA ID, made up of a username and password, to submit their *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) online and to access U.S. Department of Education websites. Your FSA ID is used to confirm your identity and electronically sign your federal student aid documents. To create an FSA ID, visit **[StudentAid.gov/fsaid](http://StudentAid.gov/fsaid)**
- 2. Complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov).** If you plan to attend college next year, you'll be able to submit a FAFSA beginning on **Oct. 1**. You'll be required to report income and tax information from the previous completed tax year. For example, on the 2017–18 FAFSA, parents must report their 2016 income information, rather than their 2017 income. Schools and states often use FAFSA information to award nonfederal aid, but their deadlines vary. Check with the schools that you're interested in for their deadlines, and find state deadlines at **[fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov)**.
- 3. Review your *Student Aid Report*.** After you apply, you'll receive a *Student Aid Report*, or SAR. Your SAR contains the information reported on your FAFSA and usually includes your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is a number (not a dollar amount) used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid. Review your SAR information to make sure it's correct. The school(s) you list on your FAFSA will get your SAR data electronically.
- 4. Contact the school(s) you might attend.** Make sure the financial aid office at each school you're interested in has all the information needed to determine your eligibility. If you're eligible, each school's financial aid office will send you an aid offer showing the amount and types of aid (from all sources) the school will offer you. You can compare the aid offers you received and see which school is the most affordable once financial aid is taken into account.

(Federal Student Aid at a Glance)

### **Sign the Form(s)!**

Most the institutions mail financial aid award packages beginning March 15 (often sooner now). Respond to the award letter immediately. Notify each college that you accept all, part, or none of the financial aid packaged offered. Ask the institution what type(s) of payment plan is available.

## **FINANCIAL AID DEFINITIONS**

**Aid Package** – A combination of grant, loan, scholarship, and work, determined by the financial aid office.

**College Work Study Work Program** – A government supported program, which provides part-time jobs to students on campus, typically 8-20 hours per week.

**FAFSA** – Free Application for Federal Student Aid is an application for federal financial assistance. It is free to apply.

**Family Contributions** – Based on income, assets, expenses, family size, number of working parents, age of parents, number of students in college, and extraordinary circumstances.

**Grants** – awards based on financial need, which do not require repayment.

**Net Worth** – Includes cash savings and checking accounts, and net worth of business/land.

**Pell Grant** – Awarded by the Federal Government on the basis of need; requires no repayment, maximum \$2,400 per year for freshman.

**Scholarships** – Non-repayable award, based on need and/or merit (athletics, fine arts, academics, etc...).

**Standard Allowances** – Federal income tax paid, social security payments, state and other taxes, medical/dental expenses, elementary/high school tuition, and standard maintenance allowances.

**Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)** – This grant is provided to a limited number of families, based on financial need, a maximum of \$4,000 per year.

## **LOANS**

**Perkins** – This loan is funded by the federal government typically at a low rate of interest. The institution gives this award; repayment typically begins nine months after graduation, maximum amount awarded is \$4,500 for freshmen.

**Stafford** – With this loan, eligible students borrow from a bank or other financial institution; repayment typically begins six months after graduation.

- Subsidized loans- Need based loans where the government pays for the interest as long as you are a part time student (6 credits).
- Unsubsidized loans- Student will pay the interest on the loan from the time the loan is first dispersed. Since it is not a need based loan, anyone can apply. Apply early!

**PLUS** – This is a non-need based loan program in which parents can borrow from a bank or other lender; repayment varies...

## **STATEMENT OF STUDENT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

### **Your Rights Include:**

- Receiving full information from colleges and universities about their admissions, financial aid, and scholarship practices.
- Not responding to an offer of admission and/or financial aid until you have heard from all colleges and universities to which you have applied or by May 1, whichever comes earlier.
- If you think your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the President of our State or Regional Association of College Admission Officers.
- If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admissions to: Executive Director, NACAC, 1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 430, Alexandria, VA 22314.

### **Your Responsibilities Include:**

- Making sure you understand the admissions, financial aid, and scholarship policies of the colleges and universities where you plan to apply. This includes being aware of deadlines, restrictions, etc...
- Before you apply, you should understand each college or university's policies and procedures regarding application fees, financial aid and scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure you understand each college or university's policies about deposits you may be required to make before you enroll and the policy about refunds of those deposits.
- Completing and submitting all material, which is required for application, and meeting all deadlines.
- Following the application procedure of your high school.
- Notifying each college or university that admits you, whether you are accepting or rejecting their offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have heard from all the colleges where you applied, or by May 1, whichever is earlier.
- Confirming your intention to enroll and submitting a deposit to only one college or university by its required notification date, usually May 1.
- If you are put on a waiting list by a college and are later admitted by that college, you may accept the offer and send a deposit to that college. However, you must immediately notify any other college where you indicated your intention to enroll of your change of plans.

## **NCAA Initial – Eligibility Clearinghouse**

Students planning to play athletics in college must meet a minimum requirement as set forth by the NCAA. To find out the various requirements go to their website [www.NCAA.org](http://www.NCAA.org).

### **SOPHOMORE YEAR**

- Begin taking college visits.
- Explore careers through job shadowing and Joy hour opportunities.

### **JUNIOR YEAR**

#### **SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER**

- Attend college representative conferences at school. Each student can choose to visit with 7 college representatives that come to Northwest.
- If you registered, take the PSAT in October.

#### **DECEMBER**

- Take the ACT or SAT

#### **FEBRUARY**

- Continue to research potential colleges. Schedule campus visits.
- Take ACT/ SAT prep classes.
- Take the ACT.

#### **MARCH**

- More time for planning college visits and checking out campuses.
- Take ACT/SAT prep classes.

#### **APRIL/MAY**

- Research colleges online.
- Check admission requirements against your own course of studies.
- Read through college catalogs.
- Visit colleges.
- Take the SAT and Achievement Tests.
- Take the ACT.

#### **SUMMER**

- June – take the ACT if you haven't or wish to repeat it.



- Improve your vocabulary skills.
- Visit colleges on your way to or from family vacations.
- Start working on your personal essay.
- Plan your fall college visits to the most competitive colleges and call for interview appointments as early in the summer as possible.

## **SENIOR YEAR**

### **SEPTEMBER**

- See Mr. Nelson or Mrs. Fink to formulate plans to avoid pitfalls. For example: Check schools of engineering and business that fill up before application deadlines.
- Fill out your applications, if available online download the Counselor form and turn it in to Mr. Nelson.
- Retake the ACT if you want to try to improve your composite score.
- If your college requires it, register for the SAT.
- Meet with college representatives visiting NW.

### **OCTOBER**

- Take the October ACT if registered.
- Register for the December ACT or SAT if you desire to retake it.
- Check to see if the colleges you are applying to require you to take any of the College Board's Achievement Tests. If they do make sure you register to take them.
- Complete any applications that you haven't finished yet.
- Early decision candidates should complete and have applications mailed.
- Begin completing the FAFSA.

### **NOVEMBER**

- Take the November SAT if you registered for it
- You should be finalizing any college applications by this time
- Early decision, deadlines are usually November 1 or November 15.
- Check colleges financial aid deadlines.

### **DECEMBER**

- Ideally have applications completed and mailed by December 1.
- Register for January Achievement Tests if your college requires them.
- Take the SAT or any Achievement Tests that may be required.

### **JANUARY**

- Take any required Achievement Tests.
- Have Mr. Nelson send your 7<sup>th</sup> semester transcript if your college requests them.

- A lot of schools' application deadlines will have passed by this point.

### FEBRUARY/MARCH

- College replies on admission are returned. If you have not heard from them by this point, check with the college.
- Notify Mr. Nelson of the college's decision.
- Review the college's timetable of deadlines for finalizing the admission process.

### APRIL

- Make your decision on your college.
- Withdraw applications from the colleges you are not attending.
- Prepare to reply to the college of your choice by May 1.

### MAY

- Return all necessary forms to the college you plan to attend.
- Notify Mr. Nelson where to mail your final transcript.