



April 26, 2022

## College 101: The World of Recommendations



### Letter of Recommendation Request Form

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student Contact (Email): \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Recommender Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Recommender Contact (Email): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you waive your right to review this recommendation (yes/no): \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Information – how the recommendation is submitted** (check all that apply):  
 Electronic Submission (circle all that apply): Common Application, Coalition Application, Common Black Colleges Application, Universal Application, SendEDU  
 Mail Submission—Student Provides Stamped/Addressed Envelope  
 with SPCPA return address – SPCPA, 16 West 5th Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102  
 School Specific Application (name/describe): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date Requested: \_\_\_\_\_ Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Unless prior approval is obtained, students are expected to provide 4 weeks between request and due dates.\**

**Required Information for Recommender:**  
 Attach Unofficial Transcript with Recommender's courses highlighted (available under the "Reports" tab on Infinite Campus)  
 Student Resume and/or List of Interests/Accomplishments/Involvement  
 List Adjectives that Best Describes You:  
 1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_

Summary page (ask if the recommender would like an emailed version) that:  
 • Tackles the big questions – Why this class? Why this teacher?  
 • Identifies your strengths as a student, performer, and/or human being.  
 • Differentiates you from your peers at SPCPA by providing examples from your recommender's class that  
   o Relate to the adjectives you listed.  
   o Describe how you have changed because of this class.  
   o Show your individual commitment to your academic/artistic growth.  
 • If desired, provide additional examples that focus on your character, personal qualities and efforts to date (inside and outside of SPCPA) that have prepared you to be a successful college student.

### Additional Supportive Details:

Arts Track: \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Major(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Most Significant Challenge(s)/Obstacle(s) You Overcame: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Most Significant Academic Highlights: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Most Significant Artistic Highlights: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Significant Experience That Impacted You: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Most Significant Extra Curricular Experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Final Notes:** Never assume that someone will write a letter of recommendation for you. If someone declines to provide you with a letter, they are actually doing you a favor by allowing you to select another person better able to describe your unique gifts and talents in the time you have given them. Never assume that you can dictate a letter of recommendation. Your recommender will craft a document that he or she feels best describes the person they know. Be grateful! Recommendations are a gift. Ask what you can do to make this job easier on them. They are doing you, and often several dozen of your peers, a favor.

Once the letter is submitted. Write the teacher a thank you note! A small token of appreciation is also welcome but does not replace a thoughtful handwritten note (or email). Acknowledge the time and effort that this individual put in to your letter and the role they are playing in helping you achieve your goals. Keep them in the loop. They will happily celebrate your victories and commiserate over your defeats. Your recommender(s) would love to know what you ultimately decided to do after SPCPA!

Recommendations are a part of some **but not all** college applications. Two year or less college programs, most four-year state schools and many private colleges and universities do NOT require a teacher recommendation (although many will accept one if provided).

**The more selective the school, the more likely the application will require or allow for at least one (if not more than one) teacher recommendation.**

To ensure the best possible recommendations next fall, rising seniors are encouraged to contact the academic teacher or teachers (including arts if interested in an audition-based program) that you believe are in the best position to describe your contribution to the classroom. Request forms can be downloaded from the [SPCPA website](#) or picked up from Ms. Green (room 224).

These forms are designed to help students provide the fullest picture of their interests and accomplishments. At this point in the application process, you will not be able to answer all the questions. **Asking now will streamline the process in the fall.**

When you have a better idea of the schools on your list

you can share more specifics with your recommender. Recommendations are a voluntary effort on your teacher's part. Recommenders who are inundated with requests may end up saying no to some seniors. **Asking now gives them a chance to prepare before the rush sets in next fall!**

## Important information for college applications:

SPCPA School Code: 242 284  
 Counselor: Alison Green  
 (greena@spcpa.org)  
 School Information:  
 16 W 5th St  
 St Paul, MN 55102  
 (651) 290-2225

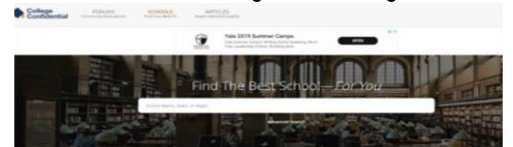
## College List Tools

Big data has made its mark on the college search process. Here are a few suggestions that may make developing your list easier...

[CollegeInSight](#) allows students to compare colleges based on financially focused variables such as average student debt.



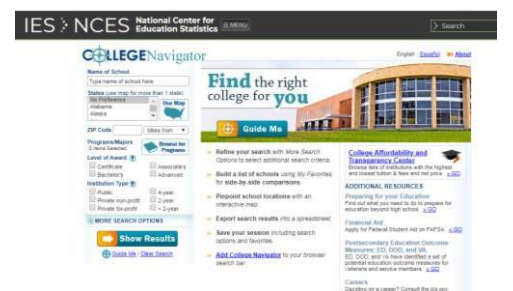
[College Confidential](#) is a discussion-based forum as well as a college search engine.



[Niche](#) provides students with "best of" lists as well as overall ratings based on data (by state and major) from the US Department of Education.



[College Navigator](#) is sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics.





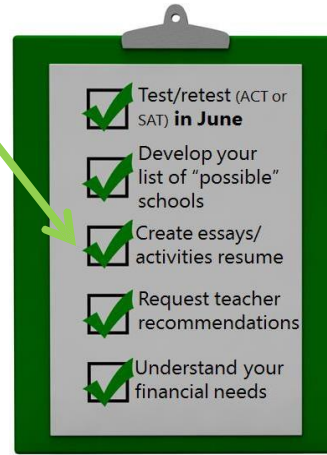
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## College 101: Activities Resume

### 10 TIPS FOR HOW TO CREATE AN ACTIVITIES LIST:

- 1. State role and organization name in top box,**  
Instead of: (top box) Environmental Club  
(description box) I founded the school club  
Try: (top box) Responsible for successful (describe events/actions)... that accomplished (what).
- 2. Emphasize tangible, measurable impact.**  
Whom did your activity help? How many people? How much money did you raise?  
Instead of: Raised money for children in Africa.  
Try: Raised \$3,000 to provide three uniforms and scholarships for students attending the Joseph Waweru Home School in Kenya ([http://www.exop.org/home\\_school.html](http://www.exop.org/home_school.html)).
- 3. Use active verbs to explain what you actually did.**  
Instead of: Worked at a clinic doing different things.  
Try: Organized patient diagnosis notes, sterilized tools for surgeries, assisted with x-ray analysis.
- 4. Use lists, don't use complete sentences, cut extra words.**  
Instead of: I raised money to donate to a school in Ghana in Africa by selling t-shirts and bracelets.  
Try: Arranged advertising events, organized fundraisers, and gave presentations at school meetings.
- 5. Use the present tense if it's something you still do.**  
Instead of: I helped tour visitors around campus and presented some information on school history and student life. Try: I give campus tours, providing info on school history, student activities, and life as a SPCPA student.
- 6. Aim for variety in your list, watch for redundancy.**  
Instead of: Instructing, helping, teaching children tennis (how are these three different?)  
Try: Instructing in proper technique, while imparting lessons in sportsmanship, health, and integrity.
- 7. Include responsibilities that demonstrate leadership skills.**  
Instead of: I act in plays, compete in dance, etc.  
Try: Responsible for leading rehearsals, planning performance logistics, assisting in recruiting process.
- 8. Explain the significance of the activity: who did the event matter to and why?**  
Rather than: Tutored students.  
Try: Provided support to fourth graders with particularly difficult math concepts.
- 9. Avoid extreme language.**  
Instead of: to help all those in need (or) to end poverty in the world  
Try: to help those in need (or) to aid in the fight against global poverty.
- 10. Use specific words.**  
Instead of: Come up with (or) told people about  
Try: Develop, brainstorm (or) advertised, marketed

## Junior Class Presentation Throwback...



Steps you can take **NOW** to make senior year easier...

### Wondering how a pandemic shortened activities list will be perceived? [Good Question!](#)

To get a fuller picture of ways in which you might contribute on campus, **colleges may ask about your involvement outside of the classroom in addition to reviewing your transcript** (and test scores if you provide them).

Knowing that COVID-19 has impacted students' ability to interact with their school and local communities over several years, **colleges with essay questions may include optional Covid specific options.** [Thinking about your answer now](#) can help you reconsider your goals for future areas of involvement as opportunities present themselves both within and beyond SPCPA over the coming months.

Over 140 colleges and universities (including all of the Ivy League schools) [endorsed a statement](#) encouraging parents and high schools to place more emphasis on students' ethical character and *less* emphasis on excessive achievement pressure. In other words, **universities are going to be more understanding if there's a "gap" in the narrative of your activities and achievements on your applications due to the COVID-19 crisis.**

But just because you've been less able to participate in formal, school-based extracurricular activities doesn't mean you aren't engaging in activities that demonstrate ethical character right now. For instance, if you've taken on more household responsibilities, such as **caring for younger family members or working to support your family**, in response to changing circumstances over the past few years, those efforts matter and should be noted in the activities portion of your applications.

**Another area that will interest them is the ways in which you've used a less full schedule to work on self-directed projects or pursue topics of interest beyond what school required.** How you've filled and shaped your pandemic experience says a lot about you and your dedication to your growth. It is a story college will be interesting in hearing!