Chapter 9: International Students
Applying to College or University in the United States

APPLYING TO COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

If you are an international student, you have many opportunities in the college system within the United States, but you also need additional information specific to you. Failure to familiarize yourself with the details could stall the process. Any questions should be directed to the college counselors or the director of international students.

Applications
You can usually use the same application forms as U.S. students, but some colleges have separate application forms, or supplemental forms, for international students, even those who have attended a U.S. secondary school such as Lawrence Academy. You should find out which application materials are appropriate for you at each college.

Proof of English Proficiency
Colleges usually require that international students take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) because they need to be assured that a student has sufficient English proficiency to succeed at the college level. As for TOEFL scores, almost all colleges look for a score over 550 on the paper-based test, 213 on the computer-based test, or 80 on the internet-based test. The most selective colleges have higher standards. It is important that you research the average minimum TOEFL scores for the colleges in which you are interested. Information can be found on each college’s website, which is the best source, or in The College Handbook’s Foreign Student Supplement, published by the College Board. It is important to look not only at requirements for the overall TOEFL score, but also to see if there are minimum scores for each sub-test. Some colleges will accept a particular score on the critical reading section of the SAT as proof of English proficiency. You should still take the TOEFL, however; a high score can help strengthen your application.

Certification of Finances
In order to obtain a visa to attend a U.S. college or university, international students must certify in writing that they have enough money in the bank to pay for tuition and other expenses. Some colleges require this documentation with the application; others request it only if the student is accepted and decides to enroll. Colleges have a form for this purpose on their websites, and most ask for an original copy of a statement from the responsible parent’s bank verifying the amount of money available, in dollars. It is essential, therefore, that, at the beginning of the application process, every international student find out what kind of documentation each college requires, and make sure all appropriate forms are completed correctly and on time. Talk with your college counselor to make sure you understand what you need and when you need it.

Note that without a certification of finances, colleges will not issue an I-20 form!
Financial Aid
At most, but not all, American colleges, international students are not eligible for need-based financial aid. All student aid from the Federal Government is reserved for U.S. citizens, though a few institutions have private financial aid funds available for students who are not U.S. citizens. Your counselor will have a list of these schools.

Some colleges offer merit scholarships (that is, awards not based on financial need) to students with exceptional academic, athletic, or other ability. You may be eligible for these scholarships. Students do not generally apply for these grants. Instead, the college might offer them upon receipt of the application. You should check the colleges’ websites to find out if they have merit scholarships for which you might be eligible, and find out if consideration for such scholarships requires an earlier application deadline.

General Information
Before finalizing the list of where you will apply for admission, you should try to determine, together with your counselor, how well your academic qualifications match up with those of previously successful applicants from Lawrence. The final list must include some institutions where your chances of acceptance appear to be very good, as well as colleges where you are less likely to be accepted. If a college has a large pool of international applicants, your chances of acceptance may be less than the chances for a U.S. student at that school.

Some colleges offer ESL and language support classes for the student whose language skills are not quite ready for the rigors of college work. If you have a low TOEFL, or a TOEFL sub-score that is below a college’s minimum, some colleges offer a transitional program in which you would primarily take language and composition with a few other courses. In this type of program, it would usually take more than the traditional four years to graduate. The vast majority of Lawrence Academy’s international students are successful in our regular English program and do not need this type of support.

Many opportunities for college admissions in the United States exist for international students. You do need to do some extra research, stay very organized, and work closely with your LA college counselor.